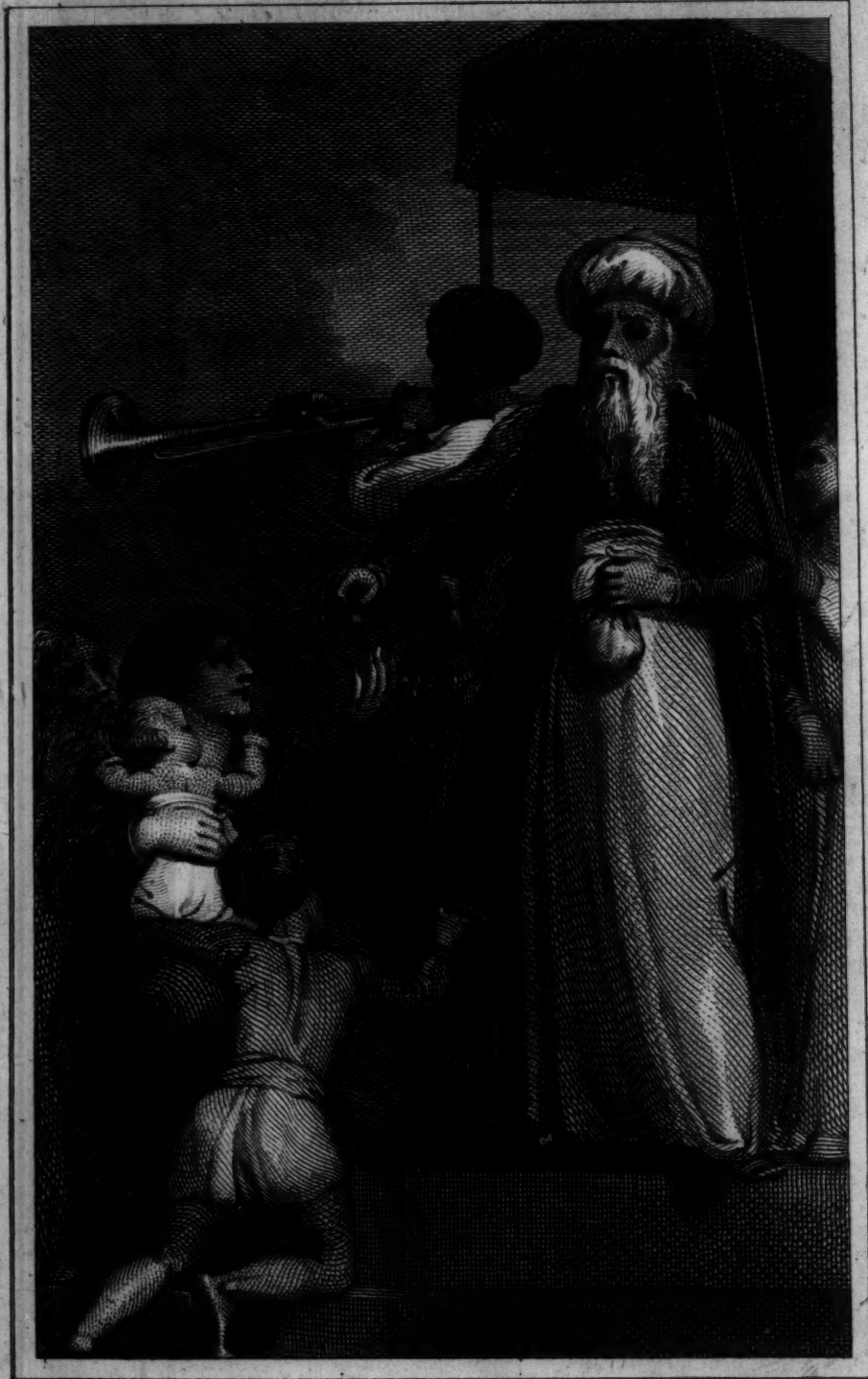


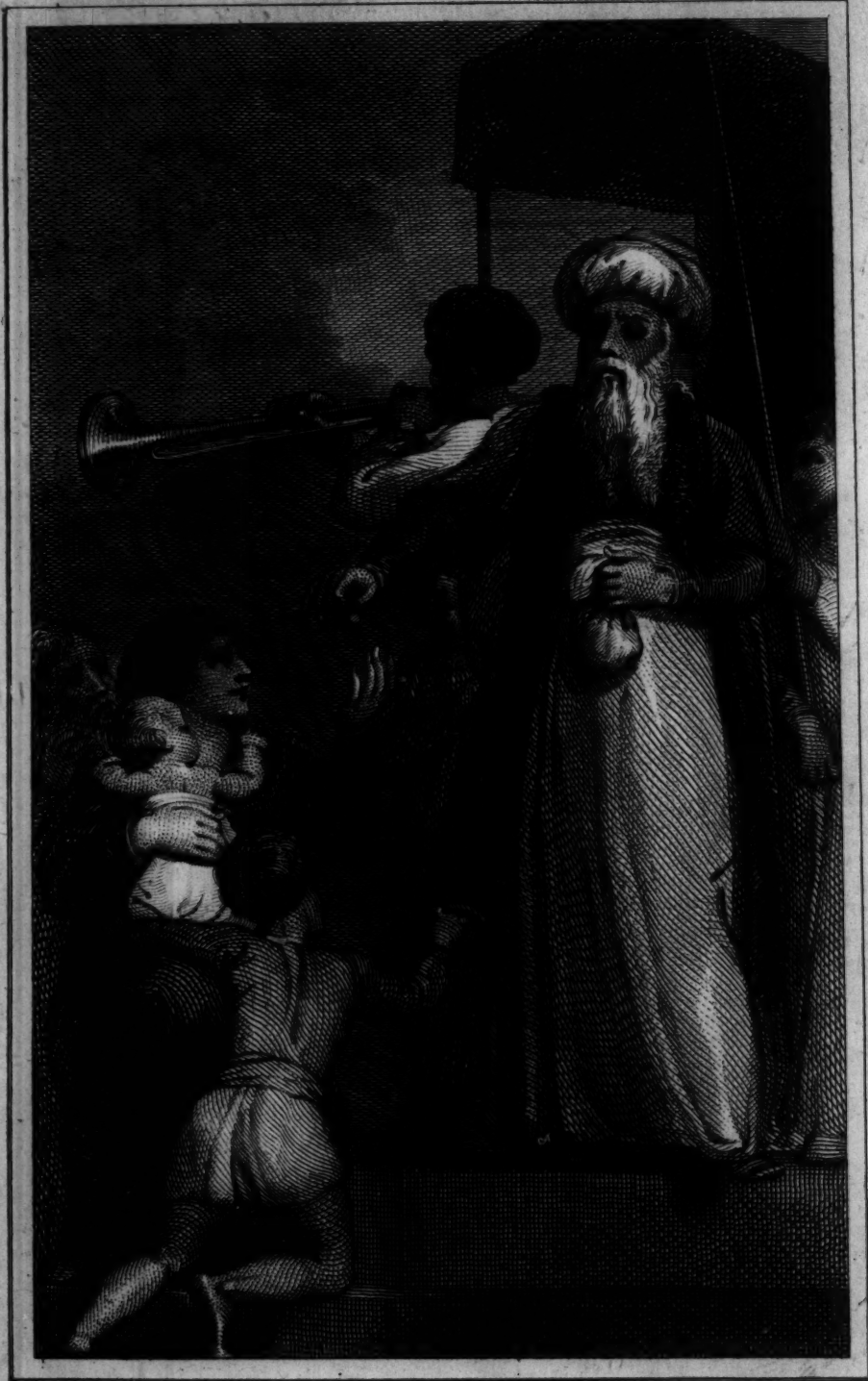


J. Stothard del^r.

R. H. Cromak sculp^r.

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THE
WORKS
OF
LAURENCE STERNE.

IN TEN VOLUMES COMPLETE.

CONTAINING,

I. THE LIFE AND OPINIONS OF TRISTRAM
SHANDY, GENT.

II. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY THROUGH
FRANCE AND ITALY.

III. SERMONS. — IV. LETTERS.

WITH
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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1798.



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BY

LAURENCE STERNE, A.M.

PREBENDARY OF YORK,
AND VICAR OF SUTTON ON THE FOREST,
AND OF STILLINGTON NEAR YORK,

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What! — Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?

THESE are the words of Job, uttered in the depth of his misfortunes, by way of reproof to his wife, for the counsel we find she had given him in the foregoing verse; namely, not to retain his integrity any longer, — but to *curse God and die*. Though it is not very evident, what was particularly meant and implied in the words — “Curse God and die,” — yet it is certain from Job’s reply to them, that they directed him to some step, which was rash and unwarrantable, and probably, as it is generally explained, meant that he should openly call God’s justice to an account, and by a blasphemous accusation of it, provoke God to

destroy his being: as if she had said,—
After so many sad things which have be-
fallen thee, notwithstanding thy integrity,
what gaineſt thou by ſerving God, ſeeing
he bears thus hard upon thee, as though
thou waſt his enemy?—Ought ſo faith-
ful a ſervant as thou haſt been, to receive
ſo much unkind treatment at his hands;
—and tamely to ſubmit to it;—patiently
to ſuſtain the evils he has brought upon
thy houſe, and neither murmur with thy
lips nor charge him with injuſtice?—Bear
it not thus;—and as thy piety could not
at firſt protect thee from ſuch misfor-
tunes,—nor thy behaviour under them
could ſince move God to take pity on
thee;—change thy conduct towards him;
—boldly expoſtulate with him;—upbraid
him openly with unkindneſs;—call his
juſtice and providence to an account for
oppreſſing thee in ſo undeſerved a man-
ner, and get that benefit by provoking
him, which thou haſt not been able to ob-
tain by ſerving him—to die at once by
his hands, and be freed at leaſt, from the
greater miſery of a lingering and more
tormenting death.

On the other hand, some interpreters tell us,——that the word *curse*, in the original, is equivocal, and does more literally signify here, to bless than to blaspheme, and consequently that the whole is rather to be considered as a sarcastical scoff at Job's piety.—As if it had been said;—Go to,—bless God,—and die;—since thou art so ready to praise him in troubles as thou hast done, go on in thy own way, and see how God will reward thee, by a miserable death which thou canst not avoid.

Without disputing the merit of these two interpretations, it may not seem an improbable conjecture, that the words imply something still different from what is expressed in either of them,——and instead of supposing them as an incitement to blaspheme God,—which was madness—or that they were intended as an insult, which was unnatural;—that her advice to curse God and die, was meant here, that he should resolve upon a voluntary death himself, which was an act not only in his own power, but what carried some ap-

pearance of a remedy with it, and promised, at least at first sight, some respite from pain, as it would put an end both to his life and his misfortunes together.

One may suppose that with all the concern and affection which was natural, she beheld her lord afflicted both with poverty and sickness; — by one sudden blow brought down from his palace to the dunghill. — In one mournful day she saw that not only the fortunes of his house were blasted, but likewise the hopes of his posterity cut off for ever by the untimely loss of his children. — She knew he was a virtuous and an upright man, and deserved a better fate; — her heart bled the more for him, — she saw the prospect before him was dreadful, — that there appeared no possible means, which could retrieve the sad situation of his affairs, — that death, the last — the surest friend to the unfortunate, could only set him free; — and that it was better to resolve upon that at once, than vainly endeavour to wade through such a sea of troubles, which in the end would overwhelm him.

We may suppose her spirits sinking under those apprehensions, when she began to look upon his constancy as a fruitless virtue, and from that persuasion, to have said unto him,—Curse God,—depend no longer upon him, nor wait the issues of his providence which has already forsaken thee:—as there is no help from that quarter, resolve to extricate thyself;—and since thou hast met with no justice in this world,—leave it,—die,—and force thy passage into a better country, where misfortunes cannot follow thee.

Whether this paraphrase upon the words is just, or the former interpretations be admitted,—the reply in the text is equally proper;—What!—Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Are not both alike the dispensations of an all-wise and good Being, who knows and determines what is *best*? and wherefore should I make myself the judge, to receive the one, and yet be so partial as to reject the other, when by fairly putting both into the scale, I may be convinced how much the good

outweighs the evil in all cases? in my own, consider how strong this argument is against me.

In the beginning of my days, how did God crown me with honour! In how remarkable a manner did his providence set a hedge about me, and about all that I had on every side!—how he prospered the works of my hands, so that our substance and happiness increased every day!

And now, when for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, he has thought fit to try me with afflictions,——shall I rebel against him in sinning with my lips, and charging him foolishly?—God forbid!——O rather may I look up towards that hand which has bruised me,—for he maketh sore and he bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole. From his bounty only has issued all I had, from his wisdom—all I have lost; for he giveth and he hath taken away: blessed be his name!

There are few instances of particular virtue more engaging than those of this heroic cast; and if we may take the tes-

timony of a heathen philosopher upon it, there is not an object in this world which God can be supposed to look down upon with greater pleasure, than that of a good man involved in misfortunes, surrounded on all sides with difficulties—yet cheerfully bearing up his head, and struggling against them with firmness and constancy of mind.—Certainly to our conceptions such objects must be truly engaging:—and the reason of so exalted an encomium from this hand, is easily to be guessed: no doubt the wisest of the heathen philosophers had found, from observation upon the life of man, that the many troubles and infirmities of his nature, the sicknesses, disappointments, sorrows for the loss of children or property, with the numberless other calamities and cross accidents to which the life of man is subject, were in themselves so *great*;—and so *little* solid comfort to be administered from the mere refinements of philosophy in such emergencies, that there was no virtue which required greater efforts, or which was found so difficult to be achieved

upon moral principles; upon moral principles—which had no foundation to sustain this great weight, which the infirmities of our nature laid upon it. And for this reason 'tis observable that there is no subject, upon which the moral writers of antiquity have exhausted so much of their eloquence, or where they have spent such time and pains, as in this of endeavouring to reconcile men to these evils. Infomuch, that from thence, in most modern languages, the patient enduring of affliction has by degrees obtained the name of Philosopher, and almost monopolized the word to itself, as if it was the chief end or compendium of all the wisdom which philosophy had to offer. And indeed, considering what lights they had, some of them wrote extremely well; yet, as what they said proceeded more from the head than the heart, 'twas generally more calculated to silence a man in his troubles, than to convince, and teach him how to bear them. And therefore however subtle and ingenious their arguments might appear in the reading, 'tis to be

feared they lost much of their efficacy when tried in the application. If a man was thrust back in the world by disappointments, or—as was Job's case—had suffered a sudden change in his fortunes, from an affluent condition was brought down by a train of cruel accidents, and pinched with poverty—philosophy would come in, and exhort him to stand his ground;—it would tell him that the same greatness and strength of mind, which enabled him to behave well in the days of his prosperity, should equally enable him to behave well in the days of his adversity;—that it was the property of only weak and base spirits, who were insolent in the one, to be dejected and overthrown by the other; whereas great and generous souls were at all times calm and equal. As they enjoyed the advantages of life with indifference,—they were able to resign them with the same temper,—and consequently,—were out of the reach of fortune. All which, however fine, and likely to satisfy the fancy of a man at ease, could convey but little con-

solation to a heart already pierced with sorrow;—nor is it to be conceived how an unfortunate creature should any more receive relief from such a lecture, however just, than a man racked with an acute fit of the gout or stone could be supposed to be set free from torture, by hearing from his physician a nice disquisition upon his case. The philosophic consolations in sickness, or in afflictions for the death of friends and kindred, were just as efficacious;—and were rather in general to be considered as good sayings than good remedies.—So that, if a man was bereaved of a promised child, in whom all his hopes and expectations centered, —or a wife was left destitute to mourn the loss and protection of a kind and tender husband, Seneca or Epictetus would tell the pensive parent and disconsolate widow,—that tears and lamentation for the dead were fruitless and absurd!—that to die, was the necessary and unavoidable debt of nature;—and as it could admit of no remedy—'twas impious and foolish to grieve and fret themselves upon it.

Upon such sage counsel, as well as many other lessons of the same stamp, the same reflection might be applied, which is said to have been made by one of the Roman emperors to one who administered the same consolations to him on a like occasion,—to whom advising him to be comforted, and make himself easy, since the event had been brought about by a fatality, and could not be helped,—he replied,——“ That this was so far from lessening his trouble,—that it was the very circumstance which occasioned it.” —So that upon the whole—when the true value of these, and many more of their current arguments have been weighed and brought to the test,—one is led to doubt, whether the greatest part of their heroes, the most renowned for constancy, were not much more indebted to good nerves and spirits, or the natural happy frame of their tempers, for behaving well, than to any extraordinary helps, which they could be supposed to receive from their instructors. And therefore I should make no scruple to assert, that one such

instance of patience and resignation as this, which the scripture gives us in the person of Job, not of one most pompously declaiming upon the contempt of pain and poverty, but of a man sunk in the lowest condition of humanity, to behold him when stripped of his estate,—his wealth, his friends, his children—cheerfully holding up his head, and entertaining his hard fortune with firmness and serenity ;—and this, not from a stoical stupidity, but a just sense of God's providence, and a persuasion of his justice and goodness in all his dealings——Such an example, I say, as this, is of more universal use, speaks truer to the heart, than all the heroic precepts, which the pedantry of philosophy has to offer.

This leads me to the point I aim at in this discourse ; namely, that there are no principles but those of religion to be depended on in cases of real distress, and that these are able to encounter the worst emergencies ; and to bear us up under all the changes and chances to which our life is subject,

Consider then what virtue the very first principle of religion has, and how wonderfully it is conducive to this end. That there is a God, a powerful, a wise and good Being, who first made the world and continues to govern it;—by whose goodness all things are designed,—and by whose providence all things are conducted to bring about the greatest and best ends. The sorrowful and pensive wretch that was giving way to his misfortunes, and mournfully sinking under them, the moment this doctrine comes in to his aid, hushes all his complaints,—and thus speaks comfort to his soul;—“It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,”—without his direction I know that no evil can befall me,—without his permission that no power can hurt me.—It is impossible a Being so wise should mistake my happiness,—or that a Being so good should contradict it. If he has denied me riches or other advantages—perhaps he foresees the gratifying my wishes would undo me, and by my own abuse of them be perverted to my ruin.—If he has de-

nied me the request of children,—or in his providence has thought fit to take them from me—how can I say—whether he has not dealt kindly with me, and only taken that away which he foresaw would embitter and shorten my days? It does so to thousands, where the disobedience of a thankless child has brought down the parents grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Has he visited me with sickness, poverty, or other disappointments?—can I say, but these are blessings in disguise?—so many different expressions of his care and concern to disentangle my thoughts from this world, and fix them upon another,—another, a better world beyond this!”—This thought opens a new scene of hope and consolation to the unfortunate:—and as the persuasion of a Providence reconciles him to the evils he has suffered,—this prospect of a future life gives him strength to despise them, and esteem the light afflictions of this life as they are—not worthy to be compared to what is reserved for him hereafter.

Things are great or small by comparison—and he who looks no farther than this world, and balances the accounts of his joys and sufferings from that consideration, finds all his sorrows enlarged, and at the close of them will be apt to look back, and cast the same sad reflection upon the whole, which the patriarch did to Pharaoh,—“That few and evil had been the days of his pilgrimage.” But let him lift up his eyes towards heaven, and stedfastly behold the life and immortality of a future state,—he then wipes away all tears from off his eyes for ever and ever;—like the exiled captive, big with the hopes that he is returning home—he feels not the weight of his chains, or counts the days of his captivity; but looks forward with rapture towards the country where his heart is fled before.

These are the aids which religion offers us towards the regulating of our spirit under the evils of life,—but like great cordials, they are seldom used but on great occurrences.—In the lesser evils

of life we seem to stand unguarded, and our peace and contentment are overthrown, and our happiness broke in upon by a little impatience of spirit, under the cross and untoward accidents we meet with. — These stand unprovided for, and we neglect them as we do the slighter indispositions of the body—which we think not worth treating seriously—and so leave them to nature. In good habits of the body, this may do, — and I would gladly believe, there are such good habits of the temper, such a complexional ease and health of heart, as may often save the patient much medicine. — We are still to consider—that however such good frames of mind are got—they are worth preserving by all rules;—patience and contentment,—which like the treasure hid in the field for which a man sold all he had to purchase—is of that price that it cannot be had at too great a purchase, since without it, the best condition in life cannot make us happy,—and with it, it is impossible we should be miserable even in the worst. — Give me leave therefore to

close this discourse with some reflections upon the subject of a contented mind——and the duty in man of regulating his spirit, in our way through life ; —— a subject in every body's mouth——preached upon daily to our friends and kindred——but too oft in such a style, as to convince the party lectured, only of this truth ;——that we bear the misfortunes of others with excellent tranquillity.

I believe there are thousands so extravagant in their ideas of contentment, as to imagine that it must consist in having every thing in this world turn out the way they wish—that they are to sit down in happiness, and feel themselves so at ease at all points, as to desire nothing better and nothing more. I own there are instances of some, who seem to pass through the world as if all their paths had been strewn with rose-buds of delight ;——but a little experience will convince us, 'tis a fatal expectation to go upon.—We are born to trouble ; and we may depend upon it whilst we live in this world we shall have it, though with

intermissions—that is, in whatever state we are, we shall find a mixture of good and evil; and therefore the true way to contentment is to know how to receive these certain vicissitudes of life,—the returns of good and evil, so as neither to be exalted by the one, or overthrown by the other, but to bear ourselves towards every thing which happens with such ease and indifference of mind, as to hazard as little as may be. This is the true temperate climate fitted for us by nature, and in which every wise man would wish to live.—God knows, we are perpetually straying out of it, and by giving wings to our imaginations in the transports we dream of, from such or such a situation in life, we are carried away alternately into all the extremes of hot and cold, for which, as we are neither fitted by nature, or prepared by expectation, we feel them with all their violence, and with all their danger too.

God, for wise reasons, has made our affairs in this world almost as fickle and capricious as ourselves—Pain and plea-

sure, like light and darkness, succeed each other; and he that knows how to accommodate himself to their periodical returns, and can wisely extract the good from the evil—knows only how to live;—this is true contentment, at least all that is to be had of it in this world, and for this every man must be indebted not to his fortune but to himself.—And indeed it would have been strange, if a duty so becoming us as dependent creatures—and so necessary besides to all our well-beings, had been placed out of the reach of any in some measure to put in practice—and for this reason, there is scarce any lot so low, but there is something in it to satisfy the man whom it has befallen; Providence having so ordered things, that in every man's cup, how bitter soever, there are some cordial drops—some good circumstances, which if wisely extracted, are sufficient for the purpose he wants them,—that is, to make him contented, and if not happy, at least resigned. May God bless us all with this spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ! Amen.



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S E R M O N XVI.

The Character of Shimei.

2 SAMUEL, XIX. 21. 1st part.

But Abishai said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this? —

— **I**T has not a good aspect — This is the second time *Abishai* has proposed *Shimei*'s destruction; once in the 16th chapter, on a sudden transport of indignation, when *Shimei* cursed David. — “*Why should this dead dog, cried Abishai, curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and cut off his head.*” — This had something at least of gallantry in it; for in doing it, he hazarded his own; and besides, the offender was not otherwise to be come at: the second time is in the text; when the offender was absolutely in their power — when the blood was cool; and the suppliant was holding up his hands for mercy.

—Shall not Shimei, answered Abishai, be put to death for this? So unrelenting a pursuit looks less like justice than revenge, which is so cowardly a passion, that it renders Abishai's first instance almost inconsistent with the second. I shall not endeavour to reconcile them; but confine the discourse simply to Shimei; and make such reflections upon his character as may be of use to society.

Upon the news of his son Absalom's conspiracy, David had fled from Jerusalem, and from his own house, for safety: the representation given of the manner of it, is truly affecting:—never was a scene of sorrow so full of distress!

The king fled with all his household to save himself from the sword of the man he loved: he fled with all the marks of humble sorrow—“*with his head cover'd and barefoot;*” and as he went by the ascent of mount Olivet, the sacred historian says, he wept—some glad some scenes, perhaps, which there had pass'd—some hours of festivity he had shared with Absalom in better days, pressed tenderly upon

nature, he wept at this sad vicissitude of things;—and all the people that were with him, smitten with his affliction, *cover'd each man his head—weeping as he went up.*

It was on this occasion, when David had got to Bahurim, that Shimei the son of Gera, as we read in the 5th verse, came out:—was it with the choicest oils he could gather from mount Olivet, to pour into his wounds?—Times and troubles had not done enough; and thou camest out, Shimei, to add thy portion—

“And as he came, he cursed David, and threw stones and cast dust at him; and thus said Shimei, when he cursed: Go to, thou man of Belial, thou hast sought blood,—and behold thou art caught in thy own mischief; for now hath the Lord returned upon thee all the blood of Saul and his house.”

There is no small degree of malicious craft in fixing upon a season to give a mark of enmity and ill-will: a word,—a look, which at one time would make no impression—at another time wounds the heart; and like a shaft flying with the

wind, pierces deep, which, with its own natural force, would scarce have reached the object aimed at.

This seemed to have been Shimei's hopes; but excess of malice makes men too quickfighted even for their own purpose. Could Shimei possibly have waited for the ebb of David's passions, and till the first great conflict within him had been over—then the reproach of being guilty of Saul's blood must have hurt him—his heart was possessed with other feelings—it bled for the deadly sting which Abfalom had given him—he felt not the indignity of a stranger—“ *Behold my son Abfalom, who came out of my bowels, seeketh my life—how much more may Shimei do it?—let him alone; it may be the Lord may look upon my affliction, and requite me good for this evil.*”

An injury unanswered in course grows weary of itself, and dies away in a voluntary remorse.

In bad dispositions capable of no restraint but fear—it has a different effect—the silent digestion of one wrong

provokes a second.—He pursues him with the same invective ; *and as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him ; and cursed as he went, and cast dust at him.*

The insolence of base minds in success is boundless ; and would scarce admit of a comparison, did not they themselves furnish us with one in the degrees of their abjection when evil returns upon them—the same poor heart which excites ungenerous tempers to triumph over a fallen adversary, in some instances seems to exalt them above the point of courage, sinks them in others even below cowardice.—Not unlike some little particles of matter struck off from the surface of the dirt by sunshine—dance and sport there whilst it lasts—but the moment 'tis withdrawn—they fall down—for dust they are—and unto dust they will return——whilst firmer and larger bodies preserve the stations which nature has assigned them, subjected to laws which no change of weather can alter.

This last did not seem to be Shimei's case; in all David's prosperity, there is

no mention made of him—he thrust himself forward into the circle, and possibly was number'd amongst friends and well-wishers.

When the scene changes, and David's troubles force him to leave his house in despair—Shimei is the first man we hear of, who comes out against him.

The wheel turns round once more; Abfalom is cast down and David returns in peace—Shimei suits his behaviour to the occasion, and is the first man also who hastes to greet him—and had the wheel turn'd round a hundred times, Shimei, I dare say, in every period of its rotation, would have been uppermost.

O Shimei! would to Heaven when thou wast slain, that all thy family had been slain with thee; and not one of thy resemblance left! but ye have multiplied exceedingly and replenished the earth; and if I prophecy rightly—ye will in the end *subdue* it.

There is not a character in the world which has so bad an influence upon the affairs of it, as this of Shimei; whilst power meets with honest checks, and the

evils of life with honest refuge, the world will never be undone : but thou, Shimei, hast sapp'd it at both extremes ; for thou corruptest prosperity—and 'tis thou who hast broken the heart of poverty ; and so long as worthless spirits can be ambitious ones, 'tis a character we shall never want. O ! it infests the court—the camp—the cabinet—it infests the church—go where you will—in every quarter, in every profession, you see a Shimei following the wheels of the fortunate through thick mire and clay. —

—Haste, Shimei!—haste; or thou wilt be undone for ever — Shimei girdeth up his loins and speedeth after him—behold the hand which governs every thing,—takes the wheels from off his chariot, so that he who driveth, driveth on heavily—Shimei doubles his speed—but 'tis the contrary way ; he flies like the wind over a sandy desert, and the place thereof shall know it no more—stay, Shimei ! 'tis your patron—your friend—your benefactor ; 'tis the man who has raised you from the dunghill

—'tis all one to Shimei : Shimei is the barometer of every man's fortune ; marks the rise and fall of it, with all the variations from scorching hot to freezing cold upon his countenance, that the smile will admit of.—Is a cloud upon thy affairs?—see—it hangs over Shimei's brow —Hast *thou been* spoken for to the king or the captain of the host without success?—look not into the court-kalendar—the vacancy is filled up in Shimei's face—Art thou in debt?—though not to Shimei—no matter—the worst officer of the law shall not be more insolent.

What then, Shimei, is the guilt of poverty so black—is it of so general concern, that thou and all thy family must rise up as one man to reproach it? —when it lost every thing—did it lose the right to pity too? or did he who maketh poor as well as maketh rich, strip it of its natural powers to mollify the hearts and supple the temper of your race?—Trust me, ye have much to answer for ; it is this treatment which it has

ever met with from spirits like yours, which has gradually taught the world to look upon it as the greatest of evils, and shun it as the worst disgrace——and what is it, I beseech you——what is it that man will not do to keep clear of so sore an imputation and punishment?—is it not to fly from this, that *he rises early—late takes rest; and eats the bread of carefulness?*—that he plots, contrives—swears—lies—shuffles—puts on all shapes—tries all garments——wears them, with this, or that side outward——just as it favours his escape?

They who have considered our nature affirm, that shame and disgrace are two of the most insupportable evils of human life: the courage and spirits of many have mastered other misfortunes, and borne themselves up against them; but the wisest and best of souls have not been a match for these; and we have many a tragical instance on record, what greater evils have been run into, merely to avoid this one.

Without this tax of infamy, poverty, with all the burdens it lays upon our flesh—so long as it is virtuous, could never break the spirits of a man; all its hunger, and pain, and nakedness, are nothing to it, they have some counterpoise of good: and besides they are directed by Providence, and must be submitted to: but those are afflictions not from the hand of GOD or nature—“*for they do come forth of the DUST, and most properly may be said to spring out of the GROUND, and this is the reason they lay such stress upon our patience,—and in the end, create such a distrust of the world, as makes us look up—and pray, Let me fall into thy hands, O God! but let me not fall into the hands of men.*”

Agreeable to this was the advice of Eliphaz to Job in the day of his distress——“*acquaint thyself, said he, now with God:*”—indeed his poverty seemed to have left him no other: the swords of the Sabeans had frightened them away—all but a few friends; and of what kind they

were, the very proverb, of *Job's comforters*—says enough.

It is an instance which gives one great concern for human nature, “That a man, *who always wept* for him who was in trouble;—*who never saw any perish for want of cloathing*;—*who never suffered the stranger to lodge in the street, but opened his door to the traveller*;”——that a man of so good a character,—“*that he never caused the eyes of the widow to fail,—or had eaten his morsel by himself alone, and the fatherless had not eaten thereof*;”——that such a man, the moment he fell into poverty, should have occasion to cry out for quarter,—*Have mercy upon me, O my friends! for the hand of God has touched me.*——

Gentleness and humanity (one would think) would melt the hardest heart, and charm the fiercest spirit; bind up the most violent hand, and still the most abusive tongue;—but the experiment failed in a stronger instance of him, whose meat and drink it was to do us good; and in pursuit of which, whose whole life was a con-

tinued scene of kindness and of insults, for which we must go back to the same explanation with which we set out,—and that is, the scandal of poverty. —

“ *This fellow, we know not whence he is* ” — was the popular cry of one part; and with those who seemed to know better, the quere did not lessen the disgrace; — Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? — of Mary; great God of Israel! What! — of the meanest of thy people! (*for he had not regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden*) — and of the poorest, too! (*for she had not a lamb to offer, but was purified as Moses directed in such a case, by the oblation of a turtle dove*).

That the SAVIOUR of their nation could be poor, and not have where to lay his head, — was a crime never to be forgiven; and though the purity of his doctrine, and the works which he had done in its support, were stronger arguments on its side, than his humiliation could be against it, — yet the offence still remained; — they looked for the redemption of Israel;

but they would have it only in those dreams of power which filled their imagination.——

Ye who weigh the worth of all things only in the goldsmith's balance!—was this religion for you?—a religion whose appearance was not great and splendid,—but looked thin and meagre, and whose principles and promises shewed more like the curses of the law, than its blessings:——for they called for sufferings, and promised little but persecutions.

In truth, it is not easy for tribulation or distress, for nakedness or famine, to make many converts out of pride; or reconcile a worldly heart to the scorn and reproaches, which were sure to be the portion of every one who believed a mystery so discredited by the world, and so unpalatable to all its passions and pleasures.

But to bring this sermon to its proper conclusion.

If Aftrea or Justice never finally took her leave of the world, till the day that poverty first became ridiculous, it is

matter of consolation, that the God of Justice is ever over us;—that whatever outrages the lowness of our condition may be exposed to, from a mean and undiscerning world,——that we walk in the presence of the greatest and most generous of Beings, who is infinitely removed from cruelty and straitness of mind, and all those little and illiberal passions, with which we hourly insult each other.

The worst part of mankind are not always to be conquered—but if they are——'tis by the imitation of these qualities which must do it:—'tis true—as I've shewn——they may fail; but still all is not lost,——for if we conquer not the world——in the very attempts to do it, we shall at least conquer ourselves, and lay the foundation of our peace (where it ought to be) within our own hearts.

S E R M O N XVII.

The Case of Hezekiah and the
Messengers*.

2 KINGS, XX. 15.

And he said, What have they seen in thine house; and Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in my house have they seen; there is nothing amongst all my treasures that I have not shewn them.

—AND where was the harm, you'll say, in all this?

“An eastern prince, the son of Bala-dine, had sent messengers with presents as far as from Babylon, to congratulate Hezekiah upon the recovery from his sickness; and Hezekiah, who was a good prince, acted consistently with himself; *he received and entertained the men, and bearkened unto them*, and before he sent them away, he courteously shewed them all

* Preached before his Excellency the Earl of HERTFORD, at Paris, 1763.

that was worth a stranger's curiosity in his house and his kingdom—and in this, seemed only to have discharged himself of what urbanity or the *etiquette* of courts might require." Notwithstanding this, in the verse which immediately follows the text, we find he had done amiss; and as a punishment for it, that all his riches, which his forefathers had laid up in store unto that day, were threatened to be carried away in triumph to Babylon, —the very place from whence the messengers had come.

A hard return! and what his behaviour does not seem to have deserved. To set this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to enlarge upon the whole story, —the reflections which will arise out of it, as we go along, may help us—at least, I hope they will be of use on their own account.

After the miraculous defeat of the Assyrians, we read in the beginning of this chapter, that Hezekiah was sick even unto death; and that God sends the prophet Isaiah, with the unwelcome mes-

sage, that he should set his house in order, for that he should die, and not live.

There are many instances of men, who have received such news with the greatest ease of mind, and even entertained the thoughts of it with smiles upon their countenances,—and this, either from strength of spirits and the natural cheerfulness of their temper,—or that they knew the world, and cared not for it,—or expected a better—yet thousands of good men, with all the helps of philosophy, and against all the assurances of a well-spent life, that the change must be to their account,—upon the approach of death have still lean'd towards this world, and wanted spirits and resolution to bear the shock of a separation from it for ever.

This, in some measure, seemed to have been Hezekiah's case; for tho' he had walked before God in truth, and with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in his sight,—yet we find that the hasty summons afflicted him greatly;—that upon the delivery of the message he wept

fore;——that he turned his face towards the wall,——perhaps for the greater secrecy of his devotion, and that, by withdrawing himself thus from all external objects, he might offer up his prayer unto his God, with greater and more fervent attention.

——And he pray'd, and said, O LORD! I beseech thee remember——O Hezekiah! How couldst thou fear that God had forgotten thee? or, how couldst thou doubt of his remembrance of thy integrity, when he call'd thee to receive its recompence?

But here it appears of what materials man is made: he pursues happiness——and yet is so content with misery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it,——and say, “ *It is good, Lord! to be here, and to build tabernacles of rest;*” and so long as we are clothed with flesh, and nature has so great a share within us, it is no wonder if that part claims its right, and pleads for the sweetness of life, notwithstanding all its care and disappointments.

This natural weakness, no doubt, had its weight in Hezekiah's earnest prayer for life; and yet from the success it met with, and the immediate change of God's purpose thereupon, it is hard to imagine, but that it must have been accompanied with some meritorious and more generous motive; and if we suppose, as some have done, that he turned his face towards the wall, because that part of his chamber looked towards the temple, the care of whose preservation lay next his heart, we may consistently enough give this sense to his prayer.

“ O God! remember how I have walk-
“ ed before thee in truth; —how much
“ I have done to rescue thy religion from
“ error and falsehood; —thou knowest
“ that the eyes of the world are fixed
“ upon me, as one that hath forsaken
“ their idolatry, and restored thy wor-
“ ship; —that I stand in the midst of a
“ crooked and corrupt generation, which
“ looks thro' all my actions, and watches
“ all events which happen to me: if
“ now they shall see me snatched away in

“ the midst of my days and service, How
“ will thy great name suffer in my ex-
“ tinction? Will not the heathen say,
“ This it is to serve the God of Israel !
“ —How faithfully did Hezekiah walk
“ before him?—What enemies did he
“ bring upon himself, in too warmly
“ promoting his worship? and now when
“ the hour of sickness and distress came
“ upon him, and he most wanted the
“ aid of his God :—behold how he was
“ forsaken !”

It is not unreasonable to ascribe some such pious and more disinterested motive to Hezekiah's desire of life, from the issue and success of his prayer :—*for it came to pass, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again and tell Hezekiah I have heard his prayer, I have seen his tears; and behold I will heal him.*

It was upon this occasion, as we read in the 12th verse of this chapter, that Baradock-baladan, son of Baladine king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto

Hezekiah: he had heard the fame of his sickness and recovery; for as the Chaldeans were great searchers into the secrets of nature, especially into the motions of the celestial bodies, in all probability they had taken notice, at that distance, of the strange appearance of the shadow's returning ten degrees backwards upon their dials, and had inquired and learned upon what account, and in whose favour, such a sign was given; so that this astronomical miracle, besides the political motive which it would suggest of courting such a favourite of heaven, had been sufficient by itself to have led a curious people as far as Jerusalem, that they might see the man for whose sake the Sun had forsook his course.

And here we see how hard it is to stand the shock of prosperity, and how much truer a proof we give of our strength in that extreme of life, than in the other.

In all the trials of adversity, we find that Hezekiah behaved well,—nothing unmannered him: when besieged by the Assyrian host, which shut him up in Jerusa-

lem, and threatened his destruction,—he stood unshaken, and depended upon God's succour.—When cast down upon his bed of sickness, and threatened with death, he meekly turned his face towards the wall,—wept and prayed, and depended upon God's mercy:—but no sooner does prosperity return upon him, and the messengers from a far country come to pay the flattering homage due to his greatness, and the extraordinary felicity of his life, but he turns giddy, and sinks under the weight of his good fortune, and with a transport unbecoming a wise man upon it, 'tis said, he hearken'd unto the men, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, the spices and the precious ointments, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures; that there was nothing in his house, nor in his dominions, that Hezekiah shew'd them not; for tho' it is not expressly said here (tho' it is in the parallel passage in Chronicles),—nor is he charged by the prophet that he did this out of vanity and a weak transport of

ostentation; — yet as we are sure God could not be offended but where there was a real crime, we might reasonably conclude that this was his, and that he who searches into the heart of man, beheld that his was corrupted with the blessings he had given him, and that it was just to make what was the occasion of his pride, become the instrument of his punishment, by decreeing, that all the riches he had laid up in store until that day, should be carried away in triumph to Babylon, the very place from whence the messengers had come who had been eye-witnesses of his folly.

“ O Hezekiah ! how couldst thou
“ provoke God to bring this judgment
“ upon thee ? How could thy spirit, all-
“ meek and gentle as it was, have ever
“ fallen into this snare ? Were thy trea-
“ sures rich as the earth — What ! was
“ thy heart so vain as to be lifted up
“ therewith ? Was not all that was va-
“ luable in the world — nay, was not hea-
“ ven itself almost at thy command whilst
“ thou wast humble ? and, How was it,

“ that thou couldst barter away all this,
“ for what was lighter than a bubble,
“ and defecrate an action so full of cour-
“ tesy and kindness as thine appeared to
“ be, by suffering it to take its rise from
“ so polluted a fountain?”

There is scarce any thing which the heart more unwillingly bears, than an analysis of this kind.

We are a strange compound; and something foreign from what charity would suspect, so eternally twists itself into what we do, that not only in momentous concerns, where interest lifts under it all the powers of disguise,—but even in the most indifferent of our actions—not worth a fallacy—by force of habit, we continue it: so that whatever a man is about, —observe him,—he stands arm’d inside and out with two motives; an ostensible one for the world,—and another which he reserves for his own private use; —this, you may say, the world has no concern with: it might have been so; but by obtruding the wrong motive upon the world, and stealing from it a cha-

rafter, instead of winning one;—we give it a right, and a temptation along with it, to inquire into the affair.

The motives of the one for doing it, are often little better than the others for deserving it. Let us see if some social virtue may not be extracted from the errors of both the one and the other.

VANITY bids all her sons to be generous and brave—and her daughters to be chaste and courteous.—But why do we want her instructions?—Ask the comedian who is taught a part he feels not—

Is it that the principles of religion want strength, or that the real passion for what is good and worthy will not carry us high enough?—GOD! thou knowest they carry us too high—we want not *to be*—but *to seem*—

Look out of your door,—take notice of that man: see what disquieting, intriguing, and shifting, he is content to go through, merely to be thought a man of plain-dealing:—three grains of ho-

nefty would fave him all this trouble——
alas! he has them not.——

Behold a fecond, under a fhew of piety
hiding the impurities of a debauched
life:——he is juft entering the houfe of
God:——would he was more pure—or
lefs pious:—but then he could not gain
his point.

Obferve a third going on almoft in the
fame track, with what an inflexible fanc-
tity of deportment he fufains himfelf as
he advances:—every line in his face
writes abftinence;——every ftroke looks
like a check upon his defires: fee, I be-
feech you, how he is cloak'd up with fer-
mons, prayers, and facraments; and fo
bemuffled with the externals of religion,
that he has not a hand to fpare for a
worldly purpofe;—he has armour at leaft
—Why does he put it on? Is there no
ferving God without all this? Muft the
garb of religion be extended fo wide to
the danger of its rending?—Yes truly,
or it will not hide the fecret——and,
What is that?

——That the saint has no religion at all.

——But here comes **GENEROSITY**; giving ——not to a decayed artist——but to the arts and sciences themselves.—See,—*he builds not a chamber in the wall apart for the prophet*; but whole schools and colleges for those who come after. **LORD!** how they will magnify his name!——’tis in capitals already; the first—the highest, in the gilded rent-roll of every hospital and asylum.——

——One honest tear shed in private over the unfortunate, is worth it all.

What a problematic set of creatures does simulation make us! Who would divine, that all that anxiety and concern, so visible in the airs of one half of that great assembly, should arise from nothing else, but that the other half of it may think them to be men of consequence, penetration, parts, and conduct?—What a noise amongst the claimants about it! Behold *Humility*, out of mere pride,——and honesty, almost out of knavery:——*Chastity*, never once in harm’s way,——

and courage, like a Spanish soldier upon an Italian stage—a bladder full of wind.—

—Hark! that, the sound of that trumpet,—let not my soldier run,—’tis some good Christian giving alms. O, PITY, thou gentlest of human passions! soft and tender are thy notes, and ill accord they with so loud an instrument.

Thus something jars, and will for ever jar in these cases: imposture is all dissonance, let what master soever of it undertake the part; let him harmonise and modulate it as he may, one tone will contradict another; and whilst we have ears to hear, we shall distinguish it; ’tis truth only which is consistent and ever in harmony with itself: it fits upon our lips, like the natural notes of some melodies, ready to drop out, whether we will or no;—it racks no invention to let ourselves alone, and needs fear no critic, to have the same excellency in the heart, which appears in the action.

It is a pleasing allusion the Scripture makes use of in calling us sometimes a house, and sometimes a temple, accord-

ing to the more or less exalted qualities of the spiritual guest which is lodged within us: whether this is the precise ground of the distinction, I will not affirm; but thus much may be said, that, if we are to be temples, 'tis truth and singleness of heart which must make the dedication: 'tis this which must first distinguish them from the unhallowed pile, where dirty tricks and impositions are practised by the host upon the traveller, who tarries but for a moment and returns not again.

We all take notice, how close and reserved people are; but we do not take notice, at the same time, that every one may have something to conceal, as well as ourselves; and that we are only marking the distances and taking the measures of self-defence from each other in the very instances we complain of: this is so true, that there is scarce any character so rare, as a man of real open and generous integrity—who carries his heart in his hand,—who says the thing he thinks, and does the thing he pretends. Though

no one can dislike the character,—yet, discretion generally shakes her head,—and the world soon lets him into the reason.

“*O that I had in the wilderness a lodging of way-faring men! that I might leave such a people, and go from them.*” Where is the man of a nice sense of truth and strong feelings, from whom the duplicity of the world has not at one time or other wrung the same wish; and where lies the wilderness to which some one has not fled, from the same melancholy impulse?

Thus much for those who give occasion to be thought ill of;—let us say a word or two unto those who take it.

But to avoid all common-place cant as much as I can on this head,—I will forbear to say, because I do not think it, that 'tis a breach of Christian charity to think or speak ill of our neighbour, &c.

—We cannot avoid it: our opinions must follow the evidence; and we are perpetually in such engagements and situations, that 'tis our duties to speak what our opinions are—but God forbid that this ever should be done but from its best

motive—the sense of what is due to virtue, governed by discretion and the utmost fellow-feeling: were we to go on otherwise, beginning with the great broad cloak of hypocrisy, and so down through all its little trimmings and facings, tearing away without mercy all that look'd seemly,——we should leave but a tatter'd world of it.

But I confine what I have to say to a character less equivocal, and which takes up too much room in the world: it is that of those, who from a general distrust of all that looks disinterested, finding nothing to blame in an action, and perhaps much to admire in it,——immediately fall foul upon its motives: *Does Job serve God for nought?* What a vile insinuation! Besides, the question was not, whether Job was a rich man or a poor man?—but, whether he was a man of integrity or no? and the appearances were strong on his side: indeed it might have been otherwise; it was possible Job might be insincere, and the devil took the advantage of the die for it.

It is a bad picture, and done by a terrible master, and yet we are always copying it. Does a man from real conviction of heart forsake his vices?—the position is not to be allowed,—no; his vices have forsaken him.

Does a pure virgin fear God and say her prayers?—she is in her climacteric.

Does humanity clothe and educate the unknown orphan?—Poverty! thou hast no genealogies:—See! is he not the father of the child? Thus do we rob heroes of the best part of their glory—their virtue. Take away the motive of the act, you take away all that is worth having in it;—wrest it to ungenerous ends, you load the virtuous man who did it with infamy;—undo it all—I beseech you: give him back his honour,—restore the jewel you have taken from him—replace him in the eye of the world—

—it is too late.

It is painful to utter the reproaches which should come in here.—I will

trust them with yourselves: in coming from that quarter, they will more naturally produce such fruits as will not set your teeth on edge—for they will be the fruits of love and good-will, to the praise of God and the happiness of the world, which I wish.

trust them with yourselves: in company
from that quarter, they will more natu-
rally produce such fruits as will not set
your teeth on edge—for they will be
the fruits of love and good-will to the
praise of God and the happiness of the
world, which I will.

S E R M O N XVIII.

The Levite and his Concubine.

JUDGES, XIX. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, who took unto him a concubine.

—A CONCUBINE!—but the text accounts for it, *for in those days there was no king in Israel*, and the Levite, you will say, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,—and so, you may add, did his concubine too,—*for she played the whore against him, and went away.*—

—Then shame and grief go with her, and wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand of justice shut the door against her!—

Not so; for she went unto her father's house in Bethlehem-judah, and was with

him four whole months.—Blessed interval for meditation upon the fickleness and vanity of this world and its pleasures! I see the holy man upon his knees,—— with hands compressed to his bosom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had so long shared his affections, was fled.——

The text gives a different picture of his situation; *for he arose and went after her to speak friendly to her, and to bring her back again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him unto her father's house; and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him—*

——A most sentimental group! you'll say: and so it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing: give but the outlines of a story,——let *Spleen* or *Prudery* snatch the pencil, and they will finish it with so many hard strokes, and with so dirty a colouring, that *Candour* and *Courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous spirits! ye who know not what it is to be rigid

interpreters, but of your own failings, —to you I address myself, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the misguided, —whence is it, that the world is not more jealous of your office? How often must ye repeat it, “That such a one’s doing so or so” —is not sufficient evidence by itself to overthrow the accused? That our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight: —that the first springs and motives which impell’d the unfortunate, lie deeper still; —and, that of the millions which every hour are arraign’d, thousands of them may have err’d merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and even when from the heart, —that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted, —the force of the passions, —the suitableness of the object, and the many struggles of virtue before she fell, —may be so many appeals from justice to the judgment-seat of pity.

Here then let us stop a moment, and give the story of the Levite and his con-

cubine a second hearing : like all others, much of it depends upon the telling ; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a story on which the heart cannot be at a loss for what to say, or the imagination for what to suppose—the danger is, humanity may say too much.

And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite sojourning on the side of Mount Ephraim, took unto himself a Concubine.—

O Abraham, thou father of the faithful ! if this was wrong,——Why didst thou set so ensnaring an example before the eyes of thy descendants ? and, Why did the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, bless so often the seed of such intercourses, and promise to multiply and make princes come out of them ?

God can dispense with his own laws ; and accordingly we find the holiest of the patriarchs, and others in Scripture, whose hearts cleaved most unto God, accommodating themselves as well as they

could to the dispensation: that Abraham had Hagar;—that Jacob, besides his two wives, Rachael and Leah, took also unto him Zilpah and Bilhah, from whom many of the tribes descended: that David had seven wives and ten concubines;—Rehoboam, sixty;—and that, in whatever cases it became reproachable, it seemed not so much the thing itself, as the abuse of it, which made it so: this was remarkable in that of Solomon, whose excess became an insult upon the privileges of mankind; for by the same plan of luxury, which made it necessary to have forty thousand stalls of horses,—he had unfortunately miscalculated his other wants, and so had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines.

Wife——deluded man! was it not that thou madest some amends for thy bad practice, by thy good preaching, what had become of thee!——three hundred——but let us turn aside, I beseech you, from so sad a stumbling-block.

The Levite had but one. The Hebrew word imports a woman a concu-

bine, or a wife a concubine, to distinguish her from the more infamous species, who came under the roofs of the licentious without principle. Our annotators tell us, that in Jewish *œconomicks*, these differ'd little from the wife, except in some outward ceremonies and stipulations, but agreed with her, in all the true essences of marriage, and gave themselves up to the husband (for so he is call'd), with faith plighted, with sentiments, and with affection.

Such a one the Levite wanted to share his solitude, and fill up that uncomfortable blank in the heart in such a situation; for notwithstanding all we meet with in books, in many of which, no doubt, there are a good many handsome things said upon the sweets of retirement, &c. . . . yet still "*it is not good for man to be alone*:" nor can all which the cold-hearted pedant stuns our ears with upon the subject, ever give one answer of satisfaction to the mind; in the midst of the loudest vauntings of philosophy, Nature will have her yearnings for society

and friendship;—a good heart wants some object to be kind to—and the best parts of our blood, and the purest of our spirits, suffer most under the destitution.

Let the torpid monk seek heaven comfortless and alone.—God speed him! For my own part, I fear, I should never so find the way: let me be wise and religious—but let me be man: wherever thy Providence places me, or whatever be the road I take to get to thee—give me some companion in my journey, be it only to remark to, How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down;—to whom I may say, How fresh is the face of nature! How sweet the flowers of the field! How delicious are these fruits!

Alas! with bitter herbs, like his pass-over, did the Levite eat them: for as they thus walked the path of life together, —she wantonly turn'd aside unto another, and fled from him.

It is the mild and quiet half of the world, who are generally outraged and borne down by the other half of it: but

in this they have the advantage; whatever be the sense of their wrongs, that pride stands not so watchful a centinel over their forgiveness, as it does in the breasts of the fierce and froward: we should all of us, I believe, be more forgiving than we are, would the world but give us leave; but it is apt to interpose its ill-office in remissions, especially of this kind: the truth is, it has its laws, to which the heart is not always a party; and acts so like an unfeeling engine in all cases without distinction, that it requires all the firmness of the most settled humanity to bear up against it.

Many a bitter conflict would the Levite have to sustain with himself—his concubine—and the sentiments of his tribe, upon the wrong done him:—much matter for pleading—and many an embarrassing account on all sides: in a period of four whole months, every passion would take its empire by turns; and in the ebbs and flows of the less unfriendly ones, PITY would find some moments to be heard—RELIGION herself would

not be silent,—CHARITY would have much to say,—and thus attun'd, every object he beheld on the borders of mount Ephraim,—every grot and grove he pass'd by, would solicit the recollection of former kindness, and awaken an advocate in her behalf more powerful than them all.

“ I grant—I grant it all”—he would cry,—“ ’tis foul ! ’tis faithless !—but,
“ Why is the door of mercy to be shut
“ for ever against it ? and, Why is it to
“ be the only sad crime that the injured
“ may not remit, or reason or imagination
“ pass over without a scar ?—Is it
“ the blackest ? In what catalogue of human
“ offences is it so marked ? or, Is
“ it, that of all others ’tis a blow most
“ grievous to be endured ?—the heart
“ cries out, It is so : but let me ask my
“ own, What passions are they which
“ give edge and force to this weapon
“ which has struck me ? and, whether it
“ is not my own pride, as much as my
“ virtues, which at this moment excite
“ the greatest part of that intolerable

“anguish in the wound which I am lay-
“ing to her charge? But, merciful hea-
“ven, was it otherwise, why is an un-
“happy creature of thine to be perfe-
“cuted by me with so much cruel re-
“venge and rancorous despite as my
“first transport called for? Have faults
“no extenuations?—Makes it nothing,
“that when the trespass was committed,
“she forsook the partner of her guilt,
“and fled directly to her father’s house?
“And is there no difference betwixt one
“propensely going out of the road and
“continuing there, through depravity of
“will—and a hapless wanderer stray-
“ing by delusion, and warily treading
“back her steps?—Sweet is the look
“of sorrow for an offence, in a heart
“determined never to commit it more!
“—Upon that altar only could I of-
“fer up my wrongs. Cruel is the pu-
“nishment which an ingenuous mind
“will take upon itself, from the remorse
“of so hard a trespass against me,—
“and if that will not balance the ac-
“count,—just God! let me forgive

“ the rest. Mercy well becomes the
“ heart of all thy creatures,——but most
“ of thy servant, a Levite, who offers up
“ so many daily sacrifices to thee, for the
“ transgressions of thy people.——

——“ But to little purpose,” he would
add, “ have I served at thy altar, where
“ my business was to sue for mercy, had
“ I not learn’d to practise it.”

Peace and happiness rest upon the head
and heart of every man who can thus
think.

*So he arose, and went after her, to speak
friendly to her—in the original—“ to speak
“ to her heart;”——to apply to their
former endearments,—and to ask, How
she could be so unkind to him, and so
very unkind to herself?——*

——Even the upbraidings of the quiet
and relenting are sweet: not like the striv-
ings of the fierce and inexorable, who bite
and devour all who have thwarted them in
their way;—but they are calm and courte-
ous, like the spirit which watches over their
character: How could such a temper woo
the damsel, and not bring her back? or,

How could the father of the damsel, in such a scene, have a heart open to any impressions but those mentioned in the text;—*That when he saw him, he rejoiced to meet him;*—urged his stay from day to day, with that most irresistible of all invitations,—“*Comfort thy heart, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.*”

If *Mercy* and *Truth* thus met together in settling this account, *Love* would surely be of the party: great—great is its power in cementing what has been broken, and wiping out wrongs even from the memory itself: and so it was—for the Levite arose up, and with him his Concubine and his servant, and they departed.

It serves no purpose to pursue the story further; the catastrophe is horrid, and would lead us beyond the particular purpose for which I have enlarged upon thus much of it, and that is, to discredit rash judgment, and illustrate from the manner of conducting this drama, the courtesy which the *dramatis personæ* of every other piece may have a right to. Almost one half of our time is spent in tell-

ing and hearing evil of one another—some unfortunate knight is always upon the stage—and every hour brings forth something strange and terrible to fill up our discourse and our astonishment, “How people can be so foolish!”—and ’tis well if the compliment ends there; so that there is not a social virtue for which there is so constant a demand,—or, consequently, so well worth cultivating, as that which opposes this unfriendly current—many and rapid are the springs which feed it, and various and sudden, God knows, are the guests which render it unsafe to us in this short passage of our life: let us make the discourse as serviceable as we can, by tracing some of the most remarkable of them up to their source.

And, first, there is one miserable inlet to this evil, and which, by the way, if speculation is supposed to precede practice, may have been derived, for aught I know, from some of our busiest inquirers after nature,—and that is, when with more zeal than knowledge we ac-

count for phenomena, before we are sure of their existence.—*It is not the manner of the Romans to condemn any man to death* (much less to be martyr'd), said Festus;—*and doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doth?* cried Nicodemus; *and he that answereth, or determineth, a matter before he has heard it,——it is folly and a shame unto him.*—We are generally in such a haste to make our own decrees, that we pass over the justice of these,——and then the scene is so changed by it, that 'tis our folly only which is real, and that of the accused, which is imaginary; through too much precipitancy it will happen so; and then the jest is spoil'd—or we have crucified our own shadow.

A second way is, when the process goes on more orderly, and we begin with getting information,——but do it from those suspected evidences, against which our SAVIOUR warns us, when he bids us, “*not to judge according to appearance:*”——in truth, 'tis behind these that most of the things which blind human judgment lie

concealed,——and, on the contrary, there are many things which appear to be,—— which are not:——*Christ came eating and drinking,—behold a wine-bibber!*——he sat with sinners——he was their friend:—— in many cases of which kind, *Truth*, like a modest matron, scorns art—and disdains to press herself forwards into the circle to be seen;——ground sufficient for *Suspicion* to draw up the libel——for *Malice* to give the torture,—or rash *Judgment* to start up and pass a final sentence.

A third way is, when the facts which denote misconduct are less disputable, but are commented upon with an asperity of censure, which a humane or a gracious temper would spare: an abhorrence against what is criminal, is so fair a plea for this, and looks so like virtue in the face, that in a sermon against rash judgment, it would be unseasonable to call it in question,——and yet, I declare, in the fullest torrent of exclamations which the guilty can deserve, that the simple apostrophe, “ who made me to differ? why was not

I an example?" would touch my heart more, and give me a better earnest of the commentators,—than the most corrosive period you could add. The punishment of the unhappy, I fear, is enough without it——and were it not,——'tis piteous, the tongue of a Christian, whose religion is all candour and courtesy, should be made the executioner. We find in the discourse between Abraham and the rich man, though the one was in heaven, and the other in hell, yet still the patriarch treated him with mild language:—*Son! Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime, &c. &c.*—and in the dispute about the body of Moses, between the Archangel and the devil (himself), St. Jude tells us, he durst not bring a railing accusation against him;—'twas unworthy his high character,——and, indeed, might have been impolitic too; for if he had (as one of our divines notes upon the passage), the devil had been too hard for him at railing,——'twas his own weapon,——and the basest spirits, after his example, are the most expert at it.

This leads me to the observation of a fourth cruel inlet to this evil, and that is, the desire of being thought men of wit and parts, and the vain expectation of coming honestly by the title, by shrewd and sarcastic reflections upon whatever is done in the world. This is setting up trade upon the broken stock of other people's failings,—perhaps their misfortunes:—so, much good may't do them with what honour they can get,—the furthest extent of which, I think, is, to be praised, as we do some fauces, with tears in our eyes: It is a commerce most illiberal; and as it requires no vast capital, too many embark in it, and so long as there are bad passions to be gratified,—and bad heads to judge, with such it may pass for wit, or at least, like some vile relation, whom all the family is ashamed of, claim kindred with it, even in better companies. Whatever be the degree of its affinity, it has helped to give wit a bad name, as if the main essence of it was satire: certainly there is a difference between *Bitterness* and *Saltiness*,—that

is,——between the malignity and the festivity of wit,——the one is a mere quickness of apprehension, void of humanity,——and is a talent of the devil; the other comes down from the Father of spirits, so pure and abstracted from persons, that willingly it hurts no man: or if it touches upon an indecorum, 'tis with that dexterity of true genius, which enables him rather to give a new colour to the absurdity, and let it pass.——He may smile at the shape of the obelisk raised to another's fame,——but the malignant wit will level it at once with the ground, and build his own upon the ruins of it.——

What then, ye rash censurers of the world! Have ye no mansions for your credit, but those from whence ye have extruded the right owners? Are there no regions for you to shine in, that ye descend for it into the low caverns of abuse and crimination? Have ye no seats——but those of the scornful to sit down in? If *Honour* has mistook his road, or the *Virtues*, in their excesses, have approached too near the confines of *VICE*, are they

therefore to be cast down the precipice?
Must BEAUTY for ever be trampled upon
in the dirt for one—one false step?
And shall no one virtue or good quality,
out of the thousand the fair penitent may
have left,—shall not one of them be
suffered to stand by her?—Just God
of Heaven and earth!

—But thou art merciful, loving, and
righteous, and lookest down with pity
upon these wrongs thy servants do unto
each other; pardon us, we beseech thee,
for them, and all our transgressions; let
it not be remember'd, that we were bre-
thren of the same flesh, the same feelings
and infirmities. O my God! write it
not down in thy book, that thou madest
us merciful after thy own image;—that
thou hast given us a religion so courteous,
—so good temper'd,—that every
precept of it carries a balm along with it
to heal the foreness of our natures, and
sweeten our spirits, that we might live
with such kind intercourse in this world,
as will fit us to exist together in a better.

S E R M O N XIX.

Felix's Behaviour towards Paul, examined.

ACTS, XXIV, 26.

. He hoped also, that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.

A NOBLE object to take up the consideration of the Roman governor!

——“ *He hoped that money should have been given him!*”——for what end? to enable him to judge betwixt right and wrong!——and, From whence was it to be wrung? from the poor scrip of a disciple of the carpenter's son, who left nothing to his followers but poverty and sufferings.——

And was this Felix!——the great, the noble Felix!——Felix the happy!——the gallant Felix, who kept Drusilla!

——Could he do this?——base passion!
What canst thou not make us do?

Let us consider the whole transaction.

Paul, in the beginning of this chapter, had been accused before Felix, by Tertullus, of very grievous crimes,——of being a pestilent fellow——a mover of seditions, and a profaner of the temple, &c.——To which accusations, the apostle having liberty from Felix to reply, he makes his defence from the 10th to the 22d verse to this purport. He shews him, first, that the whole charge was destitute of all proof; which he openly challenges them to produce against him, if they had it;——that, on the contrary, he was so far from being the man Tertullus had represented, that the very principles of the religion with which he then stood charged,——and which they called Heresy, led him to be the most unexceptionable in his conduct, by the continual exercise which it demanded of him, of having a conscience void of offence at all times, both towards God and man;

that consistently with this, his adversaries had neither found him in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue, or in the city, — for this he appeals to themselves: — that it was but twelve days since he came up to Jerusalem for to worship: — that, during that time, when he purified in the temple, he did it as became him, without noise, without tumult: this he calls upon the Jews who came from Asia, and were eye-witnesses of his behaviour, to attest; — and, in a word, he urges the whole defence before Felix in so strong a manner, and with such plain and natural arguments of his innocence, as to leave no colour for his adversaries to reply.

There was, however, still one adversary in this court, — though silent, yet not satisfied. —

— Spare thy eloquence, Tertullus! roll up the charge: a more notable orator than thyself is risen up, — 'tis AVARICE, and that too in the most fatal place for the prisoner it could have taken pos-

fession of,——'tis in the heart of the man who judges him.

If Felix believed Paul innocent, and acted accordingly—(that is) released him without reward,——this sly advocate told him he would lose one of the profits of his employment—and if he acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, which Paul occasionally explained in his defence,——it told him, he might lose the employment itself;——so that notwithstanding the character of the apostle appeared (as it was) most spotless, and the faith he professed so very clear, that as he urged it, the heart gave its consent,—yet, at the same time, the passions rebell'd, and so strong an interest was formed thereby, against the first impressions in favour of the man and his cause, that both were dismissed;——the one to a more convenient hearing, which never came; the other to the hardships of a prison for two whole years,——hoping, as the text informs us, that money should have been given him; and even at the last, when he left the province, willing to do the

Jews a pleasure,—that is,—to serve his interest in another shape, with all the conviction upon his mind, that he had done nothing worthy of bonds, he, nevertheless, left the holy man bound, and consigned over to the hopeless prospect of ending his days in the same state of confinement, in which he had ungenerously left him.

One would imagine, as covetousness is a vice not naturally cruel in itself, that there must certainly have been a mixture of other motives in the governor's breast, to account for a proceeding so contrary to humanity and his own conviction; and could it be of use to raise conjectures upon it, there seems but too probable grounds for such a supposition. It seems that Drusilla, whose curiosity, upon a double account, had led her to hear Paul,—(for she was a daughter of Abraham—as well as of Eve)—was a character which might have figured very well even in our own times; for, as Josephus tells us, she had left the Jew her husband, and without any pretence in their law to justify a divorce, had given herself up with-

out ceremony to Felix, for which cause, though she is here called his wife, she was, in reason and justice, the wife of another man,—and consequently lived in an open state of adultery. So that when Paul, in explaining the faith of CHRIST, took occasion to argue upon the morality of the Gospel—and urged the eternal laws of justice, the unchangeable obligations to temperance, of which chastity was a branch,—it was scarce possible to frame his discourse so (had he wished to temporize), but that either her interest or her love must have taken offence: and though we do not read, like Felix, that she trembled at the account, 'tis yet natural to imagine she was affected with other passions, of which the apostle might feel the effects—and 'twas well he suffered no more, if two such violent enemies as lust and avarice were combined against him.

But this by the way—for as the text seems only to acknowledge one of these motives, it is not our business to assign the other.

It is observable, that this same apostle, speaking, in the epistle to Timothy, of the ill effects of this same ruling passion, affirms, that it is the root of all evil; and I make no doubt but the remembrance of his own sufferings had no small share in the severity of the reflection.—Infinite are the examples, where the love of money is only a subordinate and ministerial passion, exercised for the support of some other vices: and 'tis generally found, when there is either ambition, prodigality, or lust, to be fed by it, that it then rages with the least mercy and discretion; in which cases, strictly speaking, it is not the root of other evils, but other evils are the root of it.

This forces me to recal what I have said upon covetousness, as a vice not naturally cruel: it is not apt to represent itself to our imaginations, at first sight, under that idea; we consider it only as a mean, worthless turn of mind, incapable of judging or doing what is right: but as it is a vice which does not always set up for itself,—to know truly what it is in

this respect, we must know what masters it serves;—they are many, and of various casts and humours,—and each one lends it something of its own complexional tint and character.

This, I suppose, may be the cause that there is a greater and more whimsical mystery in the love of money, than in the darkest and most nonsensical problem that ever was pored on.

Even at the best, and when the passion seems to seek something more than its own amusement,—there is little—very little, I fear, to be said for its humanity.—It may be a sport to the miser,—but consider,—it must be death and destruction to others.—The moment this sordid humour begins to govern—farewell all honest and natural affection! farewell all he owes to parents, to children, to friends!—how fast the obligations vanish! see—he is now stripped of all feelings whatever:—the shrill cry of justice—and the low lamentation of humble distress, are notes equally beyond his compass.—Eternal

GOD! see!—he passes by one whom thou hast just bruised, without one pensive reflection:—he enters the cabin of the widow whose husband and child thou hast taken to thyself,—exact's his bond, without a sigh!—Heaven! if I am to be tempted,—let it be by glory,—by ambition,—by some generous and manly vice:—if I must fall, let it be by some passion which thou hast planted in my nature, which shall not harden my heart, but leave me room at last to retreat and come back to thee!

It would be easy here to add the common arguments which reason offers against this vice; but they are so well understood, both in matter and form,—it is needless.

I might cite to you what Seneca says upon it—but the misfortune is, that at the same time he was writing against riches, he was enjoying a great estate, and using every means to make that estate still greater.

With infinite pleasure might a preacher enrich his discourse in this place, by

weaving into it all the smart things which ancient or modern wits have said upon the love of money:—he might inform you,

“——That poverty wants something,
“——that covetousness wanteth all.”

“That a miser can only be said to
“have riches, as a sick man has a fever,
“which holds and tyrannizes over the
“man——not he over it.”

“That covetousness is the shirt of the
“soul,——the last vice it parts with.”

“That nature is content with few
“things,——or that nature is never fa-
“tised at all,” &c.

The reflection of our SAVIOUR, *That the life of man consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,*——speaks more to the heart,——and the single hint of the *Camel*, and what a very narrow passage he has to go through,——has more coercion in it, than all the see-saws of philosophy.

I shall endeavour therefore to draw such other reflections from this piece of

sacred history, as are applicable to human life,—and more likely to be of use.

There is nothing generally in which our happiness and honour are more nearly concerned, than in forming true notions both of men and things; for in proportion as we think rightly of them, we approve ourselves to the world,—and as we govern ourselves by such judgments, so we secure our peace and well-being in passing through it: the false steps and miscarriages in life, issuing from a defect in this capital point, are so many and fatal, that there can be nothing more instructive than an inquiry into the causes of this perversion, which often appears so very gross in us, that were you to take a view of the world,—see what notions it entertains, and by what considerations it is governed,—you would say of the mistakes of human judgment, what the prophet does of the folly of human actions, —“ *That we were wise to do evil, but to judge rightly, had no understanding.*”

That in many dark and abstracted questions of mere speculation, we should err——is not strange: we live among mysteries and riddles, and almost every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be said to baffle our understandings;——yet seldom so as to mistake in extremities, and take one contrary for another;—’tis very rare, for instance, that we take the virtue of a plant to be hot, when it is extremely cold,—or, that we try the experiment of opium, to keeps us waking:——yet, this we are continually attempting in the conduct of life, as well as in the great ends and measures of it. That such wrong determinations in us do not arise from any defect of judgment inevitably misleading us——would reflect dishonour upon God; as if he had made and sent men into the world on purpose to play the fool. His all-bountiful hand made his judgment, like his heart, upright; and the instances of his sagacity, in other things, abundantly confirm it: we are led therefore

in course to a supposition, that, in all inconsistent instances, there is a secret bias, somehow or other, hung upon the mind, which turns it aside from reason and truth.

What this is, if we do not care to search for it in ourselves, we shall find it registered in this transaction of Felix: and we may depend that in all wrong judgments whatever in such plain cases as this, that the same explanation must be given of it which is given in the text, —namely, that it is some selfish consideration —some secret dirty engagement with some little appetite, which does us so much dishonour.

The judgments of the more disinterested and impartial of us, receive no small tincture from our affections: we generally consult them in all doubtful points, and it happens well if the matter in question is not almost settled before the arbitrator is called into the debate: —but in the more flagrant instances, where the passions govern the whole man, 'tis melancholy to see the office to which

reason, the great prerogative of his nature, is reduced; serving the lower appetites in the dishonest drudgery of finding out arguments to justify the present pursuit.

To judge rightly of our own worth, we should retire a little from the world, to see all its pleasures—and pains too, in their proper size and dimensions;—this, no doubt, was the reason St. Paul, when he intended to convert Felix, began his discourse upon the day of judgment, on purpose to take the heart off from this world and its pleasures, which dishonour the understanding so as to turn the wisest of men into fools and children.

If you enlarge your observations upon this plan, you will find where the evil lies which has supported those desperate opinions which have so long divided the Christian world—and are likely to divide it for ever.

Consider popery well; you will be convinced, that the truest definition which can be given of it, is,——That it is a pecuniary system, well contrived to ope-

rate upon men's passions and weakness, whilst their pockets are o'picking: run through all the points of difference between us,—and when you see, that in every one of them, they serve the same end which Felix had in view, either of money or power; there is little room left to doubt whence the cloud arises which is spread over the understanding.

If this reasoning is conclusive with regard to those who merely differ from us in religion,—let us try if it will not hold good with regard to those who have none at all,—or rather who affect to treat all persuasions of it, with ridicule alike. Thanks to good sense, good manners, and a more enlarged knowledge, this humour is going down, and seems to be settling at present, chiefly amongst the inferior classes of people——where it is likely to rest: as for the lowest ranks, though they are apt enough to follow the modes of their betters, yet are they not likely to be struck with this one, of making merry with that which is their conso-

lation; they are too serious a set of poor people ever heartily to enter into it.—

There is enough, however, of it in the world to say, that this all-sacred system, which holds the world in harmony and peace, is too often the first object that the giddy and inconsiderate make choice of to try the temper of their wits upon. Now, of the numbers who make this experiment, do you believe that one in a thousand does it from conviction,—or from arguments which a course of study, —much cool reasoning, —and a sober inquiry into antiquity, and the true merits of the question, has furnished him with?—The years and way of life of the most forward of these, lead us to a different explanation.

Religion, which lays so many restraints upon us, is a troublesome companion to those who will lay no restraints upon themselves;—and for this reason there is nothing more common to be observed, than that the little arguments and cavils which such men have gathered up against

it in the early part of their lives,—how considerable soever they may have appeared, when viewed through their passions and prejudices, which give an unnatural turn to all objects,——yet, when the edge of appetite has been worn down, and the heat of the pursuit pretty well over,——and reason and judgment have got possession of their empire——

——They seldom fail of bringing the lost sheep back to his fold,

May God bring us all there. Amen,

It is the duty of the Christian to be
 contented with the lot that is
 his, when we are through with
 and professed, which give an unusual
 turn to all objects. — Yet, when the edge
 of appetite has been worn down and the
 heat of the passion cooled, the
 good reason and judgment have the possi-
 bility of their influence. — They seldom fail of bringing the
 soul back to its fold. — May God bring us to that point.

SERMON XX.

The Prodigal Son.

LUKE, XV. 13.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all he had together, and took his journey into a far country.—

I KNOW not whether the remark is to our honour or otherwise, that lessons of wisdom have never such power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart, through the ground-work of a story which engages the passions: Is it that we are like iron, and must first be heated before we can be wrought upon? or, Is the heart so in love with deceit, that where a true report will not reach it, we must cheat it with a fable, in order to come at truth?

Whether this parable of the prodigal (for so it is usually called)—is really

such, or built upon some story known at that time in Jerusalem, is not much to the purpose; it is given us to enlarge upon, and turn to the best moral account we can.

“A certain man,” says our SAVIOUR, “had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Give me the portion of goods which falls to me: and he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”

The account is short: the interesting and pathetic passages with which such a transaction would be necessarily connected, are left to be supplied by the heart: —the story is silent— but nature is not:—much kind advice, and many a tender expostulation, would fall from the father’s lips, no doubt, upon this occasion.

He would dissuade his son from the folly of so rash an enterprise, by shewing

him the dangers of the journey,——the inexperience of his age,——the hazards his life, his fortune, his virtue would run, without a guide, without a friend: he would tell him of the many snares and temptations which he had to avoid, or encounter at every step,——the pleasures which would solicit him in every luxurious court,——the little knowledge he could gain—except that of evil: he would speak of the seductions of women—their charms——their poisons:——what hapless indulgencies he might give way to, when far from restraint, and the check of giving his father pain.

The dissuasive would but inflame his desire.——

He gathers all together.——

——I see the picture of his departure—the camels and asses laden with his substance, detached on one side of the piece, and already on their way:——the prodigal son standing on the fore ground, with a forced sedateness, struggling against the fluttering movement of joy, upon his deliverance from restraint:——

the elder brother holding his hand, as if unwilling to let it go:—the father,—sad moment! with a firm look, covering a prophetic sentiment, “that all would not go well with his child,”—approaching to embrace him and bid him adieu. —Poor inconsiderate youth! From whose arms art thou flying? From what a shelter art thou going forth into the storm? Art thou weary of a father’s affection, of a father’s care? or, Hopest thou to find a warmer interest, a truer counsellor, or a kinder friend in a land of strangers, where youth is made a prey, and so many thousands are confederated to deceive them, and live by their spoils?

We will seek no farther than this idea for the extravagancies by which the prodigal son added one unhappy example to the number: his fortune wasted—the followers of it fled in course,—the wants of nature remain,—the hand of God gone forth against him—“*for when he had spent all, a mighty famine arose in that country.*”—Heaven! have pity upon the youth, for he is in hunger and

distress——stray'd out of the reach of a parent, who counts every hour of his absence with anguish,——cut off from all his tender offices, by his folly——and from relief and charity from others, by the calamity of the times.——

Nothing so powerfully calls home the mind as distress: the tense fibre then relaxes,——the soul retires to itself,——sits pensive and susceptible of right impressions: if we have a friend, 'tis then we think of him; if a benefactor, at that moment all his kindnesses press upon our mind.—Gracious and bountiful God! Is it not for this that they who in their prosperity forget thee, do yet remember and return to thee in the hour of their sorrow? When our heart is in heaviness, upon whom can we think but thee, who knowest our necessities afar off,—puttest all our tears in thy bottle,—seest every careful thought,—hearest every sigh and melancholy groan we utter.——

Strange!—that we should only begin to think of God with comfort, when with

joy and comfort we can think of nothing else.

Man surely is a compound of riddles and contradictions: by the law of his nature he avoids pain, and yet *unless he suffers in the flesh, he will not cease from sin*, though it is sure to bring pain and misery upon his head for ever.

Whilst all went pleasurable on with the prodigal, we hear not one word concerning his father——no pang of remorse for the sufferings in which he had left him, or resolution of returning, to make up the account of his folly: his first hour of distress seem'd to be his first hour of wisdom:——*When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, whilst I perish!*

Of all the terrors of nature, that of one day or other dying by hunger, is the greatest, and it is wisely wove into our frame to awaken man to industry, and call forth his talents; and though we seem to go on carelessly, sporting with it as we do with other terrors,——yet, he

that sees this enemy fairly, and in his most frightly shape, will need no long remonstrance to make him turn out of the way to avoid him.

It was the case of the prodigal—he arose to go to his father.—

—Alas! How shall he tell his story? Ye who have trod this round, tell me in what words he shall give in to his father, the sad *Items* of his extravagance and folly?

—The feasts and banquets which he gave to whole cities in the east,—the costs of Asiatic rarities,—and of Asiatic cooks to dress them,—the expences of singing men and singing women,—the flute, the harp, the sackbut, and of all kinds of music—the dress of the Persian courts, how magnificent! their slaves how numerous!—their chariots, their horses, their palaces, their furniture, what immense sums they had devoured!—what expectations from strangers of condition! what exactions!

How shall the youth make his father comprehend, that he was cheated at Da-

masCUS by one of the best men in the world;—that he had lent a part of his substance to a friend at Nineveh, who had fled off with it to the Ganges;—that a whore of Babylon had swallowed his best pearl, and anointed the whole city with his balm of Gilead;—that he had been sold by a man of honour for twenty shekels of silver, to a worker in graven images;—that the images he had purchased had profited him nothing;—that they could not be transported across the wilderness, and had been burnt with fire at Shufan;—that the * apes and peacocks, which he had sent for from Tharsis, lay dead upon his hands; and that the mummies had not been dead long enough, which had been brought him out of Egypt:—that all had gone wrong since the day he forsook his father's house?

—Leave the story,—it will be told more concisely.—*When he was yet afar off, his father saw him,*—Compassion

* Vide 2 Chronicles, ix. 21.

told it in three words—*he fell upon his neck and kissed him.*

Great is the power of eloquence; but never is it so great as when it pleads along with nature, and the culprit is a child strayed from his duty, and returned to it again with tears: Casuists may settle the point as they will: But what could a parent see more in the account, than the natural one, of an ingenuous heart too open for the world,—smitten with strong sensations of pleasures, and suffered to fall forth unarm'd into the midst of enemies stronger than himself?

Generosity sorrows as much for the overmatched, as Pity herself does.

The idea of a son so ruin'd, would double the father's caresses: every effusion of his tenderness would add bitterness to his son's remorse.——“Gracious Heaven! what a father have I rendered miserable!”

And he said, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said, Bring forth the best robe.——

O ye affections! how fondly do you play at cross purposes with each other! ——'Tis the natural dialogue of true transport: joy is not methodical; and where an offender, beloved, overcharges itself in the offence,——words are too cold; and a conciliated heart replies by tokens of esteem.

And he said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and drink and be merry.

When the affections so kindly break loose, Joy is another name for Religion.

We look up as we taste it: the cold Stoic without, when he hears the dancing and the music, may ask sullenly (with the elder brother) What it means? and refuse to enter: but the humane and compassionate all fly impetuously to the banquet, given for a son who was dead and is alive again—who was lost and is found.

Gentle spirits light up the pavilion with a sacred fire; and parental love and filial piety lead in the mask with riot and festivity!—Was it not for this that God gave man music to strike upon the kindly passions; that Nature taught the feet to dance to its movements, and as chief governess of the feast, poured forth wine into the goblet, to crown it with gladness?

The intention of this parable is so clear from the occasion of it, that it will not be necessary to perplex it with any tedious explanation: it was designed by way of indirect remonstrance to the Scribes and Pharisees, who animadverted upon our SAVIOUR'S conduct, for entering so freely into conferences with sinners, in order to reclaim them. To that end he proposes the parable of the shepherd, who left his ninety and nine sheep that were safe in the fold, to go and seek for one sheep that was gone astray,—telling them in other places, that they who were whole wanted not a physician,—but they that were sick: and here, to carry on the same

lesson, and to prove how acceptable such a recovery was to GOD, he relates this account of the prodigal son and his welcome reception.

I know not whether it would be a subject of much edification to convince you here, that our SAVIOUR, by the prodigal son, particularly pointed at those who were *sinners of the Gentiles*, and were recovered by divine Grace to repentance; —and that by the elder brother, he intended as manifestly the more froward of the Jews, who envied their conversion, and thought it a kind of wrong to their primogeniture, in being made fellow-heirs with them of the promises of GOD.

These uses have been so ably set forth, in so many good sermons upon the prodigal son, that I shall turn aside from them at present, and content myself with some reflections upon that fatal passion which led him, —and so many thousands after the example, *to gather all he had together, and take his journey into a far country.*

The love of variety, or curiosity of seeing new things, which is the same, or

at least a sister passion to it,——seems wove into the frame of every son and daughter of Adam; we usually speak of it as one of nature's levities, though planted within us for the solid purposes of carrying forwards the mind to fresh inquiry and knowledge: strip us of it, the mind (I fear) would doze for ever over the present page; and we should all of us rest at ease with such objects as presented themselves in the parish or province where we first drew breath.

It is to this spur which is ever in our sides, that we owe the impatience of this desire for travelling: the passion is no way bad,——but as others are,——in its mismanagement or excess;——order it rightly, the advantages are worth the pursuit; the chief of which are——to learn the languages, the laws and customs, and understand the government and interest of other nations,——to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more easily for conversation and discourse——to take us out of the company of our aunts and grandmothers, and from the track of nursery

mistakes; and by showing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments—by tasting perpetually the varieties of nature, to know what is good—by observing the address and arts of men, to conceive what is sincere—and by seeing the difference of so many various humours and manners—to look into ourselves and form our own.

This is some part of the cargo we might return with; but the impulse of seeing new sights, augmented with that of getting clear from all lessons both of wisdom and reproof at home—carries our youth too early out, to turn this venture to much account; on the contrary, if the scene painted of the prodigal in his travels, looks more like a copy than an original,—will it not be well if such an adventurer, with so unpromising a setting out,—without *carte*,—without compass, —be not cast away for ever,—and may he not be said to escape well —if he returns to his country, only as naked as he first left it?

But you will send an able pilot with your son—a scholar—

If wisdom can speak in no other language but Greek or Latin—you do well—or if mathematics will make a man a gentleman—or natural philosophy but teach him to make a bow,—he may be of some service in introducing your son into good societies, and supporting him in them when he has done—but the upshot will be generally this, that in the most pressing occasions of address—if he is a mere man of reading, the unhappy youth will have the tutor to carry,—and not the tutor to carry him.

But you will avoid this extreme; he shall be escorted by one who knows the world, not merely from books—but from his own experience:—a man who has been employed on such services, and thrice made *the tour of Europe, with success.*

That is, without breaking his own, or his pupil's neck;—for if he is such as my eyes have seen! some broken *Swiss valet de chambre*,—some general undertaker, who will perform the journey in so many months, “IF GOD PERMIT,”—much knowledge will not accrue;—

some profit at least,—he will learn the amount to a halfpenny, of every stage from Calais to Rome;—he will be carried to the best inns,—instructed where there is the best wine, and sup a livre cheaper, than if the youth had been left to make the tour and the bargain himself.—Look at our governor! I beseech you:—see, he is an inch taller, as he relates the advantages.—

—And here endeth his pride—his knowledge, and his use.

But when your son gets abroad, he will be taken out of his hand, by his society with men of rank and letters, with whom he will pass the greatest part of his time.

Let me observe, in the first place,—that company which is really good, is very rare,—and very shy: but you have surmounted this difficulty; and procured him the best letters of recommendation to the most eminent and respectable in every capital.

And I answer, that he will obtain all by them, which courtesy strictly stands obliged to pay on such occasions, but no more;

There is nothing in which we are so much deceived, as in the advantages proposed from our connexions and discourse with the literati, &c. in foreign parts; especially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or study.

Conversation is a traffick; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once; and this is the reason,—however it may be boasted to the contrary, why travellers have so little (especially good) conversation with natives,—owing to their suspicion,—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young itinerants, worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their visits.

The pain on these occasions is usually reciprocal; the consequence of which is, that the disappointed youth seeks an easier society; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the Gospel.

There is nothing in which we are so much deceived, as in the advantages proposed from our connexions and discounts with the mercantile, &c. in foreign parts; especially if the experiment is made before we are matured by years or study. Conversation is a trick; and if you enter into it, without some stock of knowledge, to balance the account perpetually betwixt you,—the trade drops at once; and this is the reason,—however it may be boasted to the contrary, why travellers have so little (especially good) conversation with natives,—owing to their suspicion—or perhaps conviction, that there is nothing to be extracted from the conversation of young innkeepers, worth the trouble of their bad language,—or the interruption of their visitors.—The pain on these occasions is mutually reciprocal; the consequence of which is, that the disappointed youths seek an easier society; and as bad company is always ready, and ever lying in wait,—the career is soon finished; and the poor prodigal returns the same object of pity, with the prodigal in the Gospel.

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S E R M O N XXI.

National Mercies considered*.

DEUTERONOMY, VI. 20, 21.

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? then shalt thou say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondsmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THES E are the words which Moses left as a standing answer for the children of Israel to give their posterity, who in time to come might become ignorant, or unmindful of the many and great mercies, which God had vouchsafed to their forefathers: all which had terminated in that one of their deliverance out of bondage.

Though they were directed to speak in this manner, each man to his son, yet one cannot suppose, that the direction should be necessary for the next generation,—for

* On the Inauguration of his present Majesty.

the children of those who had been eye-witnesses of God's Providence: it does not seem likely that any of them should arrive to that age of reasoning, which would put them upon asking the supposed question, and not be long beforehand instructed in the answer. Every parent would tell his child the hardships of his captivity, and the amazing particulars of his deliverance: the story was so uncommon,——so full of wonder,——and withal, the recital of it would ever be a matter of such transport, it could not possibly be kept a secret;——the piety and gratitude of one generation would anticipate the curiosity of another; their sons would learn the story with their language.

This probably might be the case with the first or second race of people, but in process of time, things might take a different turn: a long and undisturbed possession of their liberties might blunt the sense of those providences of God, which had procured them, and set the remembrance of all his mercies at too great a distance from their hearts. After they

had for some years been eased of every real burden, an excess of freedom might make them restless under every imaginary one, and amongst others that of their religion; from thence they might seek occasion to inquire into the foundation and fitness of its ceremonies, its statutes, and its judgments.

They might ask, What meant so many commands in matters which to them appeared indifferent in their own natures? What policy in ordaining them? and, What obligation could there lie upon reasonable creatures, to comply with a multitude of such unaccountable injunctions, so unworthy the wisdom of God?

Hereafter, possibly, they might go further lengths; and though their natural bent was generally towards superstition, yet some adventurers, as is ever the case, might steer for the opposite coast, and as they advanced might discover that all religions, of what denominations or complexions soever, were alike. That the religion of their own country in particular, was a contrivance of the Priests and

Levites,—a phantom dressed out in a terrifying garb of their own making, to keep weak minds in fear:—that its rites and ceremonies, and numberless injunctions, were so many different wheels in the same political engine, put in, no doubt, to amuse the ignorant, and keep them in such a state of darkness, as clerical juggling requires.

That as for the moral part of it, though it was unexceptionable in itself,—yet it was a piece of intelligence they did not stand in want of; men had natural reason always to have found it out,—and wisdom to have practised it, without Moses's assistance.

Nay, possibly, in process of time, they might arrive at greater improvements in religious controversy—when they had given their system of infidelity all the strength it could admit of from reason, they might begin to embellish it with some more sprightly conceits and turns of ridicule.

Some wanton Israelite, when he had eaten and was full, might give free scope

and indulgence to this talent: as arguments and sober reasoning fail'd, he might turn the edge of his wit against types and symbols, and treat all the mysteries of his religion, and every thing that could be said upon so serious a subject, with raillery and mirth: he might give vent to a world of pleasantry upon many sacred passages of his law: he might banter the golden calf, or the brazen serpent, with great courage,—and confound himself in the distinctions of clean and unclean beasts, by the desperate fallies of his wit against them.

He could but possibly take one step further: when the land which flowed with milk and honey, had quite worn out the impressions of his yoke, and blessings began to multiply upon his hands, he might draw this curious conclusion, that there was no Being who was the author and bestower of them,—but that it was their own arm, and the mightiness of Israelitish strength, which had put them, and kept them, in possession of so much happiness.—

O Moses! How would thy meek and patient spirit have been put to the torture

by such a return? If a propensity towards superstition in the Israelites, did once betray thee into an excess of anger, that thou threwest the two tables out of thy hands, which God had wrote, and carelessly hazarded'st the whole treasure of the world,——with what indignation and honest anguish would'st thou have heard the scoffings of those who denied the hand which brought them forth, and said, Who is God, that we should obey his voice? With what force and vivacity would'st thou have reproached them with the history of their own nation:——that if too free an enjoyment of God's blessings, had made them forget to look backwards,——it was necessary to remind them, that their forefathers were Pharaoh's bondsmen in Egypt, without prospect of deliverance: that the chains of their captivity had been fixed and rivetted by a succession of four hundred and thirty years, without the interruption of one struggle for their liberty: that after the expiration of that hopeless period, when no natural means favoured the event, they were snatched, almost against their own

wills, out of the hands of their oppressors, and led through an ocean of dangers, to the possession of a land of plenty : that this change in their affairs was not the produce of chance or fortune,—or was it projected or executed by any atchievement or plan of human device, which might soon again be defeated by superior strength or policy from without, or from force of accidents from within, from change of circumstances, humours, and passions of men, all which generally had a sway in the rise and fall of kingdoms,——but that all was brought about by the power and goodness of God, who saw and pitied the afflictions of a distressed people, and by a chain of great and mighty deliverances, set them free from the yoke of oppression.

That since that miraculous escape, a series of successes not to be accounted for by second causes, and the natural course of events, had demonstrated not only God's providence in general, but his particular providence and attachment to them——that nations greater and mightier than they, were driven out be-

fore them, and their lands given to them for an everlasting possession.——

This was what they should teach their children, and their children's children after them.——Happy generations, for whom so joyful a lesson was prepared! happy indeed! had ye at all times known to have made the use of it, which Moses continually exhorted,——*of drawing nigh unto God with all your hearts, who had been so nigh unto you.*

And here let us drop the argument, as it respects the Jews, and for a moment turn it towards ourselves: the present occasion, and the recollection which is natural upon it, of the many other parts of this complicated blessing vouchsafed to us, since we became a nation, making it hard to desist from such an application.

I begin with the first in order of time, as well as the greatest of national deliverances,—our deliverance from darkness and idolatry, by the conveyance of the light which Christianity brought with it into Britain, so early as in the life-time

of the apostles themselves, or at furthest, not many years after their death.

Though this might seem a blessing conveyed and offered to us in common with other parts of the world, yet when you reflect upon this as a remote corner of the earth in respect of Judea,—its situation and inaccessibleness as an island,—the little that was then known of navigation,—or carried on of commerce,—the large tract of land which to this day remains unhallowed with the name of CHRIST, and almost in the neighbourhood of where the first glad tidings of him were sounded—one cannot but adore the goodness of God, and remark a more particular providence in its conveyance and establishment here, than amongst other nations upon the continent,—where, though the oppositions from error and prejudice were equal, it had not these natural impediments to encounter.

Historians and statesmen, who generally search every where for the causes of events but in the pleasure of Him who disposes of

them, may make different reflections upon this. They may consider it as a matter incidental, brought to pass by the fortuitous ambition, success, and settlement of the Romans here; it appearing that in Claudius's reign, when Christianity began to get footing in Rome, near eighty thousand of that city and people were fixed in this island: as this made a free communication betwixt the two places, the way for the gospel was in course open, and its transition from the one to the other, natural and easy to be accounted for,—and yet, nevertheless, providential. God often suffers us to pursue the devices of our hearts, whilst he turns the course of them, like the rivers of waters, to bountiful purposes. Thus, he might make that pursuit of glory inherent in the Romans, the engine to advance his own, and establish it here: he might make the wickedness of the earth to work his own righteousness, by suffering them to wander a while beyond their proper bounds, till his purposes were fulfilled, and *then put his hook into their nos-*

trils, and lead those wild beasts of prey back again into their own land.

Next to this blessing of the light of the Gospel, we must not forget that by which it was preserved from the danger of being totally smothered and extinguished, by that vast swarm of barbarous nations, which came down upon us from the north, and shook the world like a tempest; changing names and customs, and language and government, and almost the very face of nature, wherever they fixed. That our religion should be preserved at all, when every thing else seemed to perish, which was capable of change,—or, that it should not be hurt under that mighty weight of ruins, beyond the recovery of its former beauty and strength,—the whole can be ascribed to no cause so likely as this, That the same power of God which sent it forth, was present to support it—when the whole frame of other things gave way.

Next in degree to this mercy of preserving Christianity from an utter extinction—we must reckon that of being enabled to preserve, and free it from cor-

ruptions, which the rust of time,——the abuses of men, and the natural tendency of all things to degeneracy, which are trusted to them, had from time to time introduced into it.

Since the day in which this reformation was begun, by how many strange and critical turns has it been perfected and handed down, if not *entirely without spot or wrinkle*,——at least, without great blotches or marks of anility!

Even the blow which was suffered to fall upon it shortly after, in that period where our history looks so unlike herself, stain'd, Mary, by thee, and disfigured with blood:——can one reflect upon it, without adoring the Providence of God, which so speedily snatched the sword of persecution out of her hand,—making her reign as short as it was merciless.

If God then made us, as he did the Israelites, suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, how much more signal was his mercy in giving them to us without money, without price, in those good days which followed, when a long and a wise reign was as necessary to

build up our church, as a short one was before to save it from ruins.——

——The blessing was necessary,—and it was granted.——

GOD having multiplied the years of that renowned princess to an uncommon number, giving her time, as well as a heart, to fix a wavering persecuted people, and settle them upon such foundation as must make them happy;——the touchstone, by which they are to be tried, whom God has entrusted with the care of kingdoms.

Blessed be thy glorious name for ever and ever, in making that test so much easier for the British, than other princes of this earth; whose subjects, whatever other changes they have felt, have seldom happened upon that of changing their misery, and, it is to be feared, are never likely, so long as they are kept so strongly bound in chains of darkness,—and chains of power.

From both these kinds of evils, which are almost naturally connected together, How providential was our escape in the succeeding reign, when all the choice

blood was bespoke, and preparations made to offer it up at one sacrifice!

I would not intermix the horrors of that black projected festival, with the glories of this: or name the sorrows of the next reign, which ended in the subversion of our constitution, was it not necessary to pursue the thread of our deliverances through those times, and remark how nigh God's providence was to us in them both, by protecting us from the one, in as signal a manner as he restored us from the other.

Indeed the latter of them might have been a joyless matter of remembrance to us at this day, had it not been confirmed a blessing by a succeeding escape, which sealed and conveyed it safe down to us: whether it was to correct an undue sense of former blessings,—or to teach us to reflect upon the number and value of them, by threatening us with the deprivation of them,—we were suffered, however, to approach the edge of a precipice, where, if God had not raised up a deliverer to lead us back,—all had been lost:—the arts of Jesuitry had decoyed

us forwards, or if that had failed, we had been push'd down by open force, and our destruction had been inevitable.

The good consequences of that deliverance are such, that it seemed as if God had suffered our waters, like those of Bethesda, to be troubled, to make them afterwards more healing to us; since to the account of that day's blessing, we charge the enjoyment of every thing since, worth a freeman's living for,—the revival of our liberty, our religion, the just rights of our kings,—and the just rights of our people, and along with all, that happy provision for their continuance, for which we are returning thanks to God this day.

Let us do it, I beseech you, in the way which becomes wise men, by pursuing the intentions of his blessings, and making a better use of them than our forefathers, who sometimes seem'd to grow weary of their own happiness:—let us rather thank God for the good land which he has given us; and when we begin to prosper in it, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein,—

and when our silver and our gold is multiplied, and all that we have is multiplied, let the instances of our virtue and benevolence be multiplied with them, that the great and mighty God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, may, in the last day of accounting with us, judge us worthy of the mercies we have received.

In vain are days set apart to celebrate successful occurrences, unless they influence a nation's morals :——a sinful people can never be grateful to God,——nor can they, properly speaking, be loyal to their prince ;——they cannot be grateful to the one, because they live not under a sense of his mercies,——nor can they be loyal to the other, because they disengage the Providence of God from taking his part——and then giving a heart to his adversaries to be intractable.—

And therefore, what was said by some one, That every sin was a treason against the soul, may be applied here,——That every wicked man is a traitor to his king and his country. And, whatever statesmen may write of the causes of the rise

and fall of nations ;—for the contrary reasons, a good man will ever be found to be the best patriot and the best subject : and though an individual may say, What can my righteousness profit a nation of men ? it may be answered, That if it should fail of a blessing here,——it will have one advantage at least, which is this,

It will save thy own soul ; which may God grant. Amen.

and full nations;—for the contrary reason, a good man will ever be found to be the best patriot and the best subject; and though an individual may not be able to can any righteousness through a nation of men, it may be effected, that if it should fall out a blessing here, it will have one advantage at least, which is this,

It will save his own soul, which may
 : God grant, Amen.

S E R M O N XXII.

The History of Jacob considered.

GENESIS, XLVII. 9.

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been. —

TH E R E is not a man in history, whom I pity more than the man who made this reply, — not because his days were short, — but that they were long enough to have crowded into them so much evil as we find.

Of all the patriarchs, he was the most unhappy: for, 'bating the seven years he served Laban for Rachael, "*which seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her,*" — strike those out of the number, — all his other days were sorrow; and that, not from his faults, but from the ambition, the violences, and evil passions of others. A large portion of what

man is born to, comes, you'll say, from the same quarter: 'tis true; but still, in some men's lives, there seems a texture of misery:—one evil so rises out of another, and the whole plan and execution of the piece has so very melancholy an air, that a good-natured man shall not be able to look upon it, but with tears on his cheeks.

I pity this patriarch still the more, because, from his first setting out in life, he had been led into an expectation of such different scenes: he was told, by Isaac his father, that *God should bless him with the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and with plenty of corn and wine;—that people were to serve him, and nations to bow down to him;—that he should be lord over his brethren;—that blessed was every one that blessed him, and cursed was every one who cursed him.*

The simplicity of youth takes promises of happiness in the fullest latitude,—and as these were moreover confirmed to him by the God of his fathers, on his way to Padan-aran,—it would leave no distrust of their accomplishment upon his

mind;—every fair and flattering object before him, which wore the face of joy, he would regard as a portion of his blessing;—he would pursue it,—he would grasp a shadow.

This, by the way, makes it necessary to suppose, that the blessings which were conveyed, had a view to blessings not altogether such as a carnal mind would expect; but that they were in a great measure spiritual, and such as the prophetic soul of Isaac had principally before him, in the comprehensive idea of their future and happy establishment, when they were no longer to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth: for in fact, in the strict and literal sense of his father's grant,—Jacob enjoyed it not; and was so far from being a happy man, that in the most interesting passages of his life, he met with nothing but disappointments and grievous afflictions.

Let us accompany him from the first treacherous hour of a mother's ambition; in consequence of which, he is driven forth from his country, and the protection of his house, to seek protection and

an establishment in the house of Laban his kinsman.

In what manner this answered his expectations, we find from his own pathetic remonstrance to Laban, when he had pursued him seven days journey, and overtook him on Mount Gilead.—I see him in the door of the tent, with the calm courage which innocence gives the oppressed, thus remonstrating to his father-in-law upon the cruelty of his treatment.

These twenty years that I have been with thee,——thy ewes have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee,——I bare the loss of it; what was stolen by day, or stolen by night, of my hands didst thou require it. Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house:——I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Scarce had he recovered from these evils, when the ill conduct and vices of

his children wound his soul to death.—
Reuben proves incestuous,—Judah adul-
terous,—his daughter Dinah is disho-
noured,—Simeon and Levi dishonour
themselves by treachery,—two of his
grandchildren are stricken with sudden
death,—Rachael his beloved wife pe-
rishes, and in circumstances which imbit-
ter'd his loss,—his son Joseph, a most
promising youth, is torn from him, by
the envy of his brethren; and, to close
all, himself driven by famine in his old
age to die amongst the Egyptians, a
people who held it an abomination to eat
bread with him. Unhappy patriarch!
well might he say, *That few and evil had
been his days*: the answer, indeed, was
extended beyond the monarch's inquiry,
which was simply his age;—but how
could he look back upon the days of his
pilgrimage, without thinking of the sor-
rows which those days had brought along
with them? all that was more in the an-
swer than in the demand, was the over-
flowings of a heart ready to bleed afresh
at the recollection of what had befallen,

Unwillingly does the mind digest the evils prepared for it by others;—for those we prepare ourselves,—we eat but the fruit which we have planted and watered:—a shattered fortune—a shattered frame, so we have but the satisfaction of shattering them ourselves, pass naturally enough into the habit, and by the ease with which they are both done, they save the spectator a world of pity: but for those like Jacob's, brought upon him by the hands from which he looked for all his comforts,—the avarice of a parent—the unkindness of a relation,—the ingratitude of a child,—they are evils which leave a scar;—besides, as they hang over the heads of all, and therefore may fall upon any;—every looker-on has an interest in the tragedy;—but then we are apt to interest ourselves no otherwise, than merely as the incidents themselves strike our passions, without carrying the lesson further:—in a word—we realize nothing:—we sigh—we wipe away the tear,—and there ends the story of misery, and the moral with it.

Let us try to do better with this. To begin, with the bad bias which gave the whole turn to the patriarch's life,——parental partiality,——or parental injustice,——it matters not by what title it stands distinguished——'tis that, by which Rebekah planted a dagger in Esau's breast: and an eternal terror with it, in her own, lest she should live to be deprived of them both in one day,——and trust me, dear Christians, wherever that equal balance of kindness and love, which children look up to you for as their natural right, is no longer maintained—there will daggers ever be planted; *the son shall literally be set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,—and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.*

It was an excellent ordinance, as well of domestic policy, as of equity, which Moses gave upon this head, in the 21st of Deuteronomy.

If a man have two wives, one beloved and one hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the

first-born son be hers that was hated, then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved, first born, before the son of the hated which is indeed the first born, —but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for first born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. The evil was well fenced against —for 'tis one of those which steals in upon the heart with the affections, and courts the parent under so sweet a form, that thousands have been betrayed by the very virtues which should have preserved them. Nature tells the parent, there can be no error on the side of affection; —but we forget, when Nature pleads for one, she pleads for every child alike, —and, why is not her voice to be heard? Solomon says, Oppression will make a wise man mad. —What will it do then to a tender and ingenuous heart, which feels itself neglected, —too full of reverence for the author of its wrongs to complain? —see, it sits down in silence, robbed by discouragements, of all its natural powers to please, —born to see others loaded with

careless—in some uncheery corner it nourishes its discontent,—and with a weight upon its spirits, which its little stock of fortitude is not able to withstand,—it droops, and pines away.—Sad Victim of Caprice!

We are unavoidably led here into a reflection upon Jacob's conduct in regard to his son Joseph, which no way corresponded with the lesson of wisdom which the miseries of his own family might have taught him: surely his eyes had seen sorrow sufficient on that score, to have taken warning: and yet we find, that he fell into the same snare of partiality to that child in his old age, which his mother Rebekah had shewn to him in hers,—*for Israel loved Joseph more than all his children; because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colours.*—O Israel! where was that prophetic spirit which darted itself into future times, and told each tribe what was to be its fate?—Where was it fled, that it could not aid thee to look so little a way forwards, as to behold *this coat of*

many colours, stained with blood? Why were the tender emotions of a parent's anguish hid from thy eyes?—and, Why is every thing?—but that it pleases Heaven to give us no more light in our way, than will leave virtue in possession of its recompence.—

—Grant me, gracious God! to go cheerfully on the road which thou hast marked out;—I wish it neither more wide nor more smooth:—continue the light of this dim taper thou hast put into my hands:—I will kneel upon the ground seven times a day, to seek the best track I can with it—and having done that, I will trust myself and the issue of my journey to thee, who art the fountain of joy,—and will sing songs of comfort as I go along.

Let us proceed to the second great occurrence in the patriarch's life—The imposition of a wife upon him, which he neither bargain'd for or loved.—And it came to pass in the morning, behold it was Leah! and he said unto Laban, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve

thee for Rachael? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

This, indeed, is out of the system of all conjugal impositions now,——but the moral of it is still good: and the abuse with the same complaint of Jacob's upon it, will ever be repeated, so long as art and artifice are so busy as they are in these affairs.

Listen, I pray you, to the stories of the disappointed in marriage:——collect all their complaints:——hear their mutual reproaches; upon what fatal hinge do the greatest part of them turn?——“They were mistaken in the person.”——Some disguise either of body or mind is seen through in the first domestic scuffle;——some fair ornament——perhaps the very one which won the heart——*the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*, falls off;——*It is not the Rachael for whom I have served,*——*Why hast thou then beguiled me?*

Be open——be honest: give yourself for what you are; conceal nothing——varnish nothing,——and if these fair weapons will not do,——better not conquer at all, than conquer for a day:

—when the night is passed, 'twill ever be the same story,——*And it came to pass, behold it was Leah!*

If the heart beguiles itself in its choice, and imagination will give excellencies which are not the portion of flesh and blood:—when the dream is over, and we awake in the morning, it matters little whether 'tis Rachael or Leah,——be the object what it will, as it must be on the earthly side, at least, of perfection, —it will fall short of the work of fancy, whose existence is in the clouds.

In such cases of deception, let not man exclaim as Jacob does in his,——*What is it thou hast done unto me?*——for 'tis his own doings, and he has nothing to lay his fault on, but the heat and poetic indiscretion of his own passions.

I know not whether 'tis of any use to take notice of this singularity in the patriarch's life, in regard to the wrong he received from Laban, which was the very wrong he had done before to his father Isaac, when the infirmities of old age had disabled him from distinguishing one child from another: *Art thou my very son.*

Esau? and he said, I am. 'Tis doubtful whether Leah's veracity was put to the same test, but both suffered from a similitude of stratagem; and 'tis hard to say, whether the anguish, from cross'd love, in the breast of one brother, might not be as sore a punishment, as the disquietudes of cross'd ambition and revenge in the breast of the other.

I do not see which way the honour of Providence is concerned in repaying us exactly in our own coin,—or, why a man should fall into that very pit (and no other), which he has *graven and digged for another man*: time and chance may bring such incidents about, and there wants nothing, but that Jacob should have been a bad man, to have made this a common-place text for such a doctrine.

It is enough for us, that the best way to escape evil, is, in general, not to commit it ourselves—and that whenever the passions of mankind will order it otherwise, to rob those, at least, *who love judgments*, of the triumph of finding it out,——*That our travail has returned*

upon our heads, and our violent dealings upon our own pates.

I cannot conclude this discourse, without returning first to the part with which it set out;—the patriarch's account to the king of Egypt, of the shortness and misery of his days:—give me leave to bring this home to us, by a single reflection upon each.

There is something strange in it that life should appear so short *in the gross*—and yet so long *in the detail*. Misery may make it so, you'll say—but we will exclude it,—and still you'll find, though we all complain of the shortness of life, what numbers there are who seem quite overstocked with the days and hours of it, and are continually sending out into the highways and streets of the city, to compel guests to come in, and take it off their hands: to do this with ingenuity and forecast, is not one of the least arts and business of life itself; and they who cannot succeed in it, carry as many marks of distress about them, as bankruptcy herself could wear. Be as careless as we

may, we shall not always have the power,
—— nor shall we always be in a temper
to let the account run thus. When the
blood is cool'd, and the spirits, which
have hurried us on through half our days,
before we have numbered one of them,
are beginning to retire; —— then wisdom
will press a moment to be heard, —— afflic-
tions or a bed of sickness will find their
hours of persuasion, —— and, should they
fail, there is something yet behind, ——
old age will overtake us at the last, and
with its trembling hand hold up the glass
to us, as it did to the patriarch. ——

—— Dear inconsiderate Christians! wait
not, I beseech you, till then; —— take a
view of your life now: —— look back,
behold this fair space capable of such
heavenly improvements —— all scrawl'd
over and defaced with —— I want words
to say, with what —— for I think only of
the reflections with which you are to sup-
port yourselves, in the decline of a life so
miserably cast away, should it happen,
as it often does, that ye have stood idle
unto the eleventh hour, and have all the

work of the day to perform when night comes on, and no one can work.

2dly. As to the evil of the days of the years of our pilgrimage——speculation and fact appear at variance again.——We agree with the patriarch, that the life of man is miserable; and yet the world looks happy enough——and every thing tolerably at its ease. It must be noted indeed, that the patriarch, in this account, speaks merely his present feelings, and seems rather to be giving a story of his sufferings, than a system of them, in contradiction to that of the God of Love. Look upon the world he has given us,——observe the riches and plenty which flows in every channel, not only to satisfy the desires of the temperate,——but of the fanciful and wanton——every place is almost a paradise, planted when Nature was in her gayest humour.

——Every thing has two views. Jacob, and Job, and Solomon, gave one section of the globe,——and this representation another :——truth lieth betwixt——or rather, good and evil are mixed up

together; which of the two preponderates, is beyond our enquiry;—but, I trust—it is the good:—first, As it renders the Creator of the world more dear and venerable to me; and secondly, Because I will not suppose, that a work intended to exalt his glory, should stand in want of apologies.

Whatever is the proportion of misery in this world, it is certain, that it can be no duty of religion to increase the complaint,——or to affect the praise which the Jesuits' college of Granado gave of their *Sanchez*,——That though he lived where there was a very sweet garden, yet was never seen to touch a flower; and that he would rather die than eat salt or pepper, or aught that might give a relish to his meat.

I pity the men, whose natural pleasures are burdens, and who fly from joy (as these splenetic and morose souls do), as if it was really an evil in itself.

If there is an evil in this world, 'tis sorrow and heaviness of heart.——The loss of goods,——of health,——of coronets

and mitres, are only evil, as they occasion sorrow;—take that out—the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man.

Poor unfortunate creature that he is! as if the causes of anguish in the heart were not enow—but he must fill up the measure with those of caprice; and not only walk in a vain shadow,—but disquiet himself in vain too.

We are a restless set of beings; and as we are likely to continue so to the end of the world,—the best we can do in it, is to make the same use of this part of our character, which wise men do of other bad propensities—when they find they cannot conquer them,—they endeavour, at least, to divert them into good channels.

If therefore we must be a solicitous race of self-tormentors,—let us drop the common objects which make us so,—and for God's sake be solicitous only to live well.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

The Parable of the Rich Man and
Lazarus considered.

LUKE, XVI. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.

THESSE words are the conclusion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; the design of which was, to shew us the necessity of conducting ourselves, by such lights as God had been pleased to give us: the sense and meaning of the patriarch's final determination in the text being this, That they who will not be persuaded to answer the great purposes of their being, upon such arguments as are offered to them in Scripture, will never be persuaded to it by any other means, how extraordinary soever;—*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will*

they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.—

—Rise from the dead! To what purpose? What could such a messenger propose or urge, which had not been proposed and urged already? The novelty or surprize of such a visit might awaken the attention of a curious unthinking people, who spent their time in nothing else, but to hear and tell some new thing; but ere the wonder was well over, some new wonder would start up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a soul make one inquiry about him.

—This, I fear, would be the conclusion of the affair. But to bring this matter still closer to us, let us imagine, if there is nothing unworthy in it, that God, in compliance with a curious world, — or from a better motive, — in compassion to a sinful one, should vouchsafe to send one from the dead, to call home our conscience and make us better Christians, better citizens, better men, and better servants to God than what we are.

Now bear with me, I beseech you, in framing such an address, as, I imagine, would be most likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to say: the great channel to it is Interest,——and there he would set out.

He might tell us (after the most indisputable credentials of whom he served), That he was come a messenger from the great God of Heaven, with reiterated proposals, whereby much was to be granted us on his side,——and something to be parted with on ours: but that, not to alarm us,——’twas neither houses, nor land, nor possessions;——’twas neither wives, or children, or brethren, or sisters, which we had to forsake;——no one rational pleasure to be given up;——no natural endearment to be torn from——

——In a word, he would tell us, We had nothing to part with——but what was not for our interests to keep——and that was our Vices; which brought death and misery to our doors.

He would go on, and prove it by a thousand arguments, that to be temperate and chaste, and just and peaceable, and

charitable and kind to one another—— was only doing that for CHRIST's sake, which was most for our own; and that were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would submit to his government,——he would convince us, 'twould be impossible for the wit of man to frame any proposals more for our present interests, than *to lead an uncorrupted life——to do the thing which is lawful and right*, and lay such restraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature, and the refinement of human happiness.

When this point was made out, and the alarms from interest got over,——the spectre might address himself to the other passions——In doing this he could but give us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of God,——or could he do more than impress the most awful ones, of his majesty and power:——he might remind us, that we are creatures but of a day, hastening to the place from whence we shall not return;——that during our stay we stood accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercies,

——yet was terrible in his judgments;
——that he took notice of all our actions
——that he was about our paths, and
about our beds, and spied out all our
ways; and was so pure in his nature, that
he would punish even the wicked imagi-
nations of the heart, and had appointed a
day, wherein he would enter into this in-
quiry.——

He might add ——

But what? ——with all the eloquence of
an inspired tongue, What could he add
or say to us, which has not been said be-
fore? The experiment has been tried a
thousand times upon the hopes and fears,
the reasons and passions of men, by all
the powers of nature ——the applications
of which have been so great, and the va-
riety of addressees so unanswerable, that
there is not a greater paradox in the world,
than that so good a religion should be no
better recommended by its professors.

The fact is, mankind are not always in
a humour to be convinced,——and so long
as the pre-engagement with our passions
subsists, it is not argumentation which can

do the business;—we may amuse ourselves with the ceremony of the operation, but we reason not with the proper faculty, when we see every thing in the shape and colouring, in which the treachery of the senses paints it: and indeed, were we only to look into the world, and observe how inclinable men are to defend evil, as well as to commit it,——one would think, at first sight, they believed, that all discourses of religion and virtue were mere matters of speculation, for men to entertain some idle hours with; and conclude very naturally, that we seemed to be agreed in no one thing, but speaking well, —and acting ill. But the truest comment is in the text,—*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, &c.*

If they are not brought over to the interests of religion upon such discoveries as God has made——or has enabled them to make, they will stand out against all evidence:——in vain shall *one* rise for their conviction;——was the earth to give up her dead—'twould be the same;——every man would return again to his

course, and the same bad passions would produce the same bad actions to the end of the world.

This is the principal lesson of the parable ; but I must enlarge upon the whole of it——because it has some other useful lessons, and they will best present themselves to us as we go along.

In this parable, which is one of the most remarkable in the Gospel, our SAVIOUR represents a scene, in which, by a kind of contrast, two of the most opposite conditions that could be brought together from human life, are pass'd before our imaginations.

The one, a man exalted above the level of mankind, to the highest pinnacle of prosperity,——to riches——to happiness——I say, *happiness*,——in compliance with the world, and on a supposition, that the possession of riches must make us happy, when the very pursuit of them so warms our imagination, that we stake both body and soul upon the event, as if they were things not to be purchased at too dear a rate. They are the wages of wisdom,——as well as of folly.——

Whatever was the case here, is beyond the purport of the parable—the Scripture is silent, and so should we; it marks only his outward condition, by the common appendages of it, in the two great articles of Vanity and Appetite:—to gratify the one, he was clothed in purple and fine linen: to satisfy the other,—fared sumptuously every day;—and upon every thing too—we'll suppose, that climates could furnish—that luxury could invent, or the hand of science could torture.

Close by his gates is represented an object whom Providence might seem to have placed there, to cure the pride of man, and shew him to what wretchedness his condition might be brought: a creature in all the shipwreck of nature, —helpless,—undone,—in want of friends, in want of health,—and in want of every thing with them which his distresses called for,

In this state he is described as desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; and though the case is not expressly put, that he was refused,

yet as the contrary is not affirmed in the historical part of the parable, — or pleaded after by the other, that he shewed mercy to the miserable, we may conclude his request was unsuccessful — like too many others in the world, either so high lifted up in it, that they cannot look down distinctly enough upon the sufferings of their fellow-creatures, — or by long surfeiting in a continual course of banqueting and good cheer, they forget there is such a distemper as hunger, in the catalogue of human infirmities.

Overcharged with this, and perhaps a thousand unpitied wants in a pilgrimage through an inhospitable world, the poor man sinks silently under his burden. — But, good God! whence is this? Why dost thou suffer these hardships in a world which thou hast made? Is it for thy honour, that one man should eat the bread of fulness, and so many of his own stock and lineage eat the bread of sorrow? — That this man should go clad in purple, and have all his paths strewed with rose-buds of delight, whilst so many mournful passengers go heavily along, and pass

by his gates, hanging down their heads? Is it for thy glory, O GOD! that so large a shade of misery should be spread across thy works:—or, is it that we see but a part of them? When the great chain at length is let down, and all that has held the two worlds in harmony is seen; —when the dawn of that day approaches, in which all the distressful incidents of this drama shall be unravell'd; —when every man's case shall be reconsidered, —then wilt thou be fully justified in all thy ways, and every mouth shall be stopped.

After a long day of mercy mispent in riot and uncharitableness, the rich man *died also*: —the parable adds, —and was buried: —Buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill-timed pride of funerals, and empty decorations, which worldly folly is apt to prostitute upon those occasions.

But this was the last vain show; the utter conclusion of all his epicurean grandeur; —the next is a scene of horror, where he is represented by our SAVIOUR, in a state of the utmost misery, from

whence he is supposed to lift up his eyes towards heaven, and cry to the patriarch Abraham for mercy.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.

—— That he had received his good things, —— 'twas from heaven, —— and could be no reproach : with what severity soever the Scripture speaks against riches, it does not appear, that the living or faring sumptuously every day, was the crime objected to the rich man ; or that it is a real part of a vicious character : the case might be then as now : his quality and station in the world might be supposed to be such, as not only to have justified his doing this, but, in general, to have required it without any imputation of doing wrong ; for differences of stations there must be in the world, which must be supported by such marks of distinction as custom imposes. The exceeding great plenty and magnificence, in which Solomon is described to have lived, who had ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep,

besides harts and roe-bucks, and fallow deer and fatted fowl, with thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, for the daily provision of his table ;——all this is not laid to him as a sin, but rather remarked as an instance of God's blessing to him ;——and whenever these things are otherwise, 'tis from a wasteful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends,——and oft-times, to the very opposite ones for which they were granted,——to glad the heart, to open it, and render it more kind.——

And this seems to have been the snare the rich man had fallen into—and possibly, had he fared less sumptuously,——he might have had more cool hours for reflection, and been better disposed to have conceived an idea of want, and to have felt compassion for it.

And Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.

——Remember ! sad subject of recollection ! that a man has passed through this world with all the blessings and advantages of it, on his side,——favoured by

God Almighty with riches——befriended by his fellow-creatures in the means of acquiring them,——assisted every hour by the society of which he is a member, in the enjoyment of them—to remember, how much he has received,——how little he has bestowed,——that he has been no man's friend,—no one's protector,——no one's benefactor,——blessed God!

Thus begging in vain for himself, he is represented at last as interceding for his brethren, that Lazarus might be sent to them to give them warning, and save them from the ruin which he had fallen into;——*They have Moses and the prophets,* was the answer of the patriarch,——*let them hear them*; but the unhappy man is represented, as discontented with it; and still persisting in his request, and urging,——*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they would repent.*

——He thought so——but Abraham knew otherwise:——And the grounds of the determination I have explained already,——so shall proceed to draw some other conclusions and lessons from the parable.

And first, our SAVIOUR might further intend to discover to us by it, the dangers to which great riches naturally expose mankind, agreeably to what is elsewhere declared, how hardly shall they who have them, enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The truth is, they are often too dangerous a blessing for GOD to trust us with, or we to manage: they surround us at all times with ease, with nonsense, with flattery and false friends, with which thousands and ten thousands have perished: — they are apt to multiply our faults, and treacherously to conceal them from us; — they hourly administer to our temptations; — and neither allow us time to examine our faults, or humility to repent of them: — nay, what is strange, do they not often tempt men even to covetousness? and though amidst all the ill offices which riches do us, one would least suspect this vice, but rather think the one a cure for the other; yet so it is, that many a man contracts his spirits upon the enlargement of his fortune, and is the more empty for being full.

But there is less need to preach against this : we seem all to be hastening to the opposite extreme of luxury and expence : we generally content ourselves with the solution of it ; and say, 'Tis a natural consequence of trade and riches—and there it ends.

By the way, I affirm, there is a mistake in the account ; and that it is not riches which are the cause of luxury,—but the corrupt calculation of the world, in making riches the balance for honour, for virtue, and for every thing that is great and good, which goads so many thousands on with an affectation of possessing more than they have,—and consequently of engaging in a system of expences they cannot support.

In one word, 'tis the necessity of *appearing* to be somebody, in order to be so—which ruins the world.

This leads us to another lesson in the parable, concerning the true use and application of riches ; we may be sure from the treatment of the rich man, that he did not employ those talents as God intended.—

How GOD did intend them,—may as well be known from an appeal to your own hearts, and the inscription you shall read there—as from any chapter and verse I might cite upon the subject. Let us then for a moment, my dear auditors, turn our eyes that way, and consider the traces which even the most insensible man may have proof of, from what he may perceive springing up within him from some casual act of generosity; and though this is a pleasure which properly belongs to the good, yet let him try the experiment;—let him comfort the captive, or cover the naked with a garment, and he will feel what is meant by that moral delight arising in the mind from the conscience of a humane action.

But to know it right, we must call upon the compassionate—Cruelty gives evidence unwillingly, and feels the pleasure but imperfectly; for this, like all other pleasures, is of a relative nature, and consequently the enjoyment of it requires some qualification in the faculty, as much as the enjoyment of any other good does:—there must be something

antecedent in the disposition and temper which will render that good—a good to that individual; otherwise, though 'tis true it may be possessed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.

Consider how difficult you will find it to convince a miserly heart, that any thing is good, which is not profitable; or a libertine one, that any thing is bad, which is pleasant.

Preach to a voluptuary, who has modell'd both mind and body to no other happiness but good eating and drinking, —bid him *taste and see how good God is*: —there is not an invitation in all nature would confound him like it.

In a word, a man's mind must be like your proposition, before it can be relished; and 'tis the resemblance between them, which brings over his judgment, and makes him an evidence on your side.

'Tis therefore not to the cruel,—'tis to the merciful;—to those who rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,—that we make this

appeal :——'tis to the generous, the kind, the humane, that I am now to tell the sad* story of the fatherless, and of him who hath no helper, and bespeak your almsgiving in behalf of those, who know not how to ask for it themselves.

——What can I say more?——it is a subject on which I cannot inform your judgment,——and in such an audience, I would not presume to practise upon your passions: let it suffice to say, that they whom God hath blessed with the means,——and for whom he has done more, in blessing them likewise with a disposition,—have abundant reason to be thankful to him, as the author of every good gift, for the measure he hath bestowed to them for both: 'tis the refuge against the stormy wind and tempest, which he has planted in our hearts; and the constant fluctuation of every thing in this world, forces all the sons and daughters of Adam to seek shelter under it by turns. Guard it by entails and settlements as we will, the most affluent plenty may be stripp'd, and

* Charity Sermon at St. Andrew's, Holborn.

find all its worldly comforts like so many withered leaves dropping from us;—the crowns of princes may be shaken; and the greatest that ever awed the world, have looked back and moralized upon the turn of the wheel.

That which has happened to one,—— may happen to every man: and therefore that excellent rule of our SAVIOUR, in acts of benevolence, as well as every thing else, should govern us;——*That whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them.*

Hast thou ever laid upon the bed of languishing, or laboured under a distemper which threatened thy life? Call to mind thy sorrowful and pensive spirit at that time, and say, What it was that made the thoughts of death so bitter:—if thou hast children,—— I affirm it the bitterness of death lay there!——if unbrought up, and unprovided for, What will become of them? Where will they find a friend when I am gone, who will stand up for them, and plead their cause against the wicked?

——Blessed God! to thee, who art a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow,—I intrust them.

Hast thou ever sustained any considerable shock in thy fortune? or, Has the scantiness of thy condition hurried thee into great straits, and brought thee almost to distraction? Consider what was it that spread a table in that wilderness of thought,—who made thy cup to overflow? Was it not a friend of consolation who stepped in,—saw thee embarrassed with tender pledges of thy love, and the partner of thy cares,—took them under his protection?—Heaven! thou wilt reward him for it!—and freed thee from all the terrifying apprehensions of a parent's love.

——Hast thou——

——But how shall I ask a question which must bring tears into so many eyes? —Hast thou ever been wounded in a more affecting manner still, by the loss of a most obliging friend,—or been torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child by the stroke of death?

——bitter remembrance! nature droops at it—but nature is the same in all conditions and lots of life.——A child thrust forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of instruction, and the means of its salvation, is a subject of more tender heart-aches, and will awaken every power of nature:——as we have felt for ourselves,—let us feel for CHRIST sake—let us feel for theirs: and may the GOD of all comfort bless you. Amen.

...the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God, is the power of love. It is the power of love that makes us love one another, and that makes us love God. It is the power of love that makes us love the world, and that makes us love the world as God loves it. It is the power of love that makes us love the world as God loves it, and that makes us love the world as God loves it.

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S E R M O N XXIV.

Pride.

LUKE, XIV. 10, 11.

But thou, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that biddeth thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them who sit at meat with thee; for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

IT is an exhortation of our SAVIOUR'S to Humility, addressed by way of inference from what he had said in the three foregoing verses of the chapter; where, upon entering into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread, and marking how small a portion of this necessary virtue entered in with the several guests, discovering itself from their choosing the chief rooms, and most distinguished places of honour;—he takes the occasion which such a behaviour offered, to

caution them against Pride;—states the inconvenience of the passion;—shews the disappointments which attend it;—the disgrace in which it generally ends; in being forced at last to recede from the pretensions to what is more than our due; which, by the way, is the very thing the passion is eternally prompting us to expect. When, therefore, thou art bidden to a wedding, says our SAVIOUR, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bad thee and him, come and say to thee,—Give this man place: and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

—But thou, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room:—hard lecture!—In the lowest room?—What,—do I owe nothing to myself? Must I forget my station, my character in life? Resign the precedence which my birth, my fortune, my talents, have already placed me in possession of;—give all up! and suffer inferiors to take my honours? Yes;—for that, says our SAVIOUR, is the road to it: *For when he that*

bad thee cometh, he will say to thee, Friend, go up higher ; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee :—for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

To make good the truth of which declaration, it is not necessary we should look beyond this life, and say, That in that day of retribution, wherein every high thing shall be brought low, and every irregular passion dealt with as it deserves ;—that pride, amongst the rest (considered as a vicious character), shall meet with its proper punishment of being abased, and lying down for ever in shame and dishonour.—It is not necessary we should look so far forwards for the accomplishment of this : the words seem not so much to imply the threat of a distant punishment, the execution of which was to be respited to that day ;—as the declaration of a plain truth depending upon the natural course of things, and evidently verified in every hour's commerce of the world ; from whence, as well as from our reasoning upon the

point, it is found, That Pride lays us open to so many mortifying encounters, which Humility in its own nature rests secure from,——that verily, each of them, in this world, have their reward faithfully dealt out by the natural workings of men's passions; which, though very bad executioners in general, yet are so far just ones in this, that they seldom suffer the exultations of an insolent temper to escape the abasement, or the deportment of a humble one to fail of the honour, which each of their characters do deserve.

In other vicious excesses which a man commits, the world (though it is not much to its credit) seems to stand pretty neuter: if you are extravagant or intemperate, you are looked upon as the greatest enemy to yourself,——or if an enemy to the public, at least, you are so remote a one to each individual, that no one feels himself immediately concerned in your punishment: but in the instances of Pride, the attack is personal: for as this passion can only take its rise from a secret comparison, which the party has been making of himself to my disadvantage,

every intimation he gives me of what he thinks of the matter, is so far a direct injury, either as it withholds the respect which is my due,——or perhaps denies me to have any; or else, which presses equally hard, as it puts me in mind of the defects which I really have, and of which I am truly conscious, and consequently think myself the less deserving of an admonition: in every one of which cases, the proud man, in whatever language he speaks it,——if it is expressive of this superiority over me, either in the gifts of fortune, the advantages of birth or improvements, as it has proceeded from a mean estimation, and possibly a very unfair one, of the like pretensions in myself,——the attack, I say, is personal; and has generally the fate to be felt and resented as such.

So that with regard to the present inconveniences, there is scarce any vice, bating such as are immediately punished by laws, which a man may not indulge with more safety to himself, than this one of Pride;——the humblest of men not being so entirely void of the passion them-

selves, but that they suffer so much from the overflowings of it in others, as to make the literal accomplishment of the text a common interest and concern: in which they are generally successful,—the nature of the vice being such, as not only to tempt you to it, but to afford the occasions itself of its own humiliation.

The proud man,——see!——he is fore all over; touch him——you put him to pain: and though of all others, he acts as if every mortal was void of all sense and feeling, yet is possessed with so nice and exquisite a one himself, that the flights, the little neglects and instances of disesteem, which would be scarce felt by another man, are perpetually wounding him, and oft-times piercing him to his very heart.

I would not therefore be a proud man was it only for this, that it should not be in the power of every one who thought fit—to chastise me;——my other infirmities, however unworthy of me, at least will not incommode me:——so little discountenance do I see given to them, that it is not the world's fault, if I suffer by

them:—but here—if I exalt myself, I have no prospect of escaping;—with this vice I stand swoln up in every body's way, and must unavoidably be thrust back: whichever way I turn, whatever step I take under the direction of this passion, I press unkindly upon some one, and in return, must prepare myself for such mortifying repulses, as will bring me down, and make me go on my way sorrowing.

This is from the nature of things, and the experience of life as far back as Solomon, whose observation upon it was the same,—and it will ever hold good, *that before honour was humility, and a haughty spirit before a fall—Put not therefore thyself forth in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:—for better is it—*(which by the way is the very dissuasive in the text)*—better is it, that it be said unto thee, Friend, come up higher, than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.*

Thus much for the illustration of this one argument of our SAVIOUR's, against

Pride :——there are many other considerations which expose the weakness of it, which his knowledge of the heart of man might have suggested ; but as the particular occasion which gave rise to this lecture of our SAVIOUR'S against Pride naturally led him to speak of the mortifications which attend such instances of it, as he then beheld :——for this reason the other arguments might be omitted, which perhaps in a set discourse would be doing injustice to the subject. I shall therefore, in the remaining part of this, beg leave to offer some other considerations of a moral as well as a religious nature upon this subject, as so many inducements to check this weak passion in man ; which, though one of the most convenient of his infirmities,—the most painful and discourteous to society, yet, by a sad fatality, so it is, that there are few vices except such whose temptations are immediately seated in our natures, to which there is so general a propensity throughout the whole race.

This had led some satirical pens to write, That all mankind at the bottom

were proud alike;—that one man differed from another, not so much in the different portions which he possessed of it, as in the different art and address by which he excels in the management and disguise of it to the world: we trample, no doubt, too often, upon the pride of Plato's mantle, with as great a pride of our own; yet on the whole the remark has more spleen than truth in it; there being thousands (if any evidence is to be allowed) of the most unaffected humility, and truest poverty of spirit, which actions can give proof of. Notwithstanding this, so much may be allowed to the observation, That Pride is a vice which grows up in society so insensibly;—steals in unobserved upon the heart upon so many occasions;—forms itself upon such strange pretensions, and when it has done, veils itself under such a variety of unsuspected appearances,—sometimes even under that of Humility itself;—in all which cases, Self-love, like a false friend, instead of checking, most treacherously feeds this humour,—points out some excellence in every soul to make him vain, and think

more highly of himself, than he ought to think ; — that, upon the whole, there is no one weakness into which the heart of man is more easily betray'd — or which requires greater helps of good sense and good principles to guard against.

And first, the root from which it springs is no inconsiderable discredit to the fruit.

If you look into the best moral writers, who have taken pains to search into the grounds of this passion, — they will tell you, that Pride is the vice of little and contracted souls ; — that whatever affectation of greatness it generally wears and carries in the looks, there is always meanness in the heart of it : — a haughty and an abject temper, I believe, are much nearer a-kin than they will acknowledge ; — like *poor* relations, they look a little shy at one another at first sight, but trace back their pedigree, they are but collateral branches from the same stem ; and there is scarce any one who has not seen many such instances of it, as one of our poets alludes to, in that admirable stroke he has given of this affinity, in his description of a *Pride which licks the dust*.

As it has *meannefs* at the bottom of it, —so it is juſtly charged with having *weaknefs* there too, of which it gives the ſtrong-eſt proof in regard to the chief end it has in view, and the abſurd means it takes to bring it about.

Conſider a moment, —What is it the proud man aims at? —why, —ſuch a meaſure of reſpect and deference, as is due to his ſuperior merit, &c. &c.

Now, good ſenſe and a knowledge of the world ſhew us, that how much ſoever of theſe are due to a man, allowing he has made a right calculation, —they are ſtill dues of ſuch a nature, that they are not to be inſiſted upon: Honour and Reſpect muſt be a *Free-will offering*: treat them otherwiſe, and claim them from the world as a tax, —they are ſure to be withheld; the firſt diſcovery of ſuch an expectation diſappoints it, and prejudices your title to it for ever.

To this ſpeculative argument of its weakneſs, it has generally the ill fate to add another of a more ſubſtantial nature, which is matter of fact; that to turn giddy

upon every little exaltation, is experienced to be no less a mark of a *weak brain* in the figurative, than it is in the literal sense of the expression——in sober truth, 'tis but a scurvy kind of a trick (*quoties voluit Fortuna jocari*)—when Fortune, in one of her merry moods, takes a poor devil with this passion in his head, and mounts him up all at once as high as she can get him——for it is sure to make him play such phantastic tricks, as to become the very fool of the comedy; and was he not a general benefactor to the world in making it merry, I know not how Spleen could be pacified during the representation.

A third argument against Pride is the natural connection it has with vices of an unsocial aspect: the Scripture seldom introduces it alone——Anger, or Strife, or Revenge, or some inimical passion, is ever upon the stage with it; the proofs and reasons of which I have not time to enlarge on, and therefore shall say no more upon this argument than this,——that was there no other,——yet the bad company this vice is generally found in,

would be sufficient by itself to engage a man to avoid it.

Thus much for the moral considerations upon this subject; a great part of which, as they illustrate chiefly the inconveniences of Pride in a social light, may seem to have a greater tendency to make men guard the appearances of it, than conquer the passion itself, and root it out of their nature: to do this effectually, we must add the arguments of religion, without which, the best moral discourse may prove little better than a cold political lecture, taught merely to govern the passion so, as not to be injurious to a man's present interest or quiet; all which a man may learn to practise well enough, and yet at the same time be a perfect stranger to the best part of humility, which implies not a concealment of Pride, but an absolute conquest over the first risings of it which are felt in the heart of man.

And, first, one of the most persuasive arguments which religion offers to this end is that which rises from the state and

condition of ourselves, both as to our natural and moral imperfections. It is impossible to reflect a moment upon this hint, but with a heart full of the humble exclamation, *O God! what is man!*——*even a thing of nought*——a poor, infirm, miserable short-lived creature, that passes away like a shadow, and is hastening off the stage where the theatrical titles and distinctions, and the whole mask of Pride which he has worn for a day will fall off, and leave him naked as a neglected slave. Send forth your imagination, I beseech you, to view the last scene of the greatest and proudest who ever awed and governed the world—see the empty vapour disappearing! one of the arrows of mortality this moment sticks fast within him: see—it forces out his life, and freezes his blood and spirits.

——Approach his bed of state——lift up the curtain——regard a moment with silence——

——Are these cold hands and pale lips all that is left of him who was canoniz'd by his own pride, or made a god of, by his flatterers?

O my soul ! with what dreams hast thou been bewitched ? how hast thou been deluded by the objects thou hast so eagerly grasped at ?

If this reflection from the natural imperfection of man, which he cannot remedy, does nevertheless strike a damp upon human Pride, much more must the considerations do so, which arise from the wilful depravations of his nature.

Survey yourselves, my dear Christians, a few moments in this light—behold a disobedient, ungrateful, intractable, and disorderly set of creatures, going wrong seven times in a day,—acting sometimes every hour of it against your own convictions—your own interests, and the intentions of your God, who wills and proposes nothing but your happiness and prosperity—what reason does this view furnish you for Pride ? how many does it suggest to mortify and make you ashamed ?—well might the son of Syrach say in that sarcastical remark of his upon it, *That PRIDE was not made for man*—for some purposes, and for some particular beings, the passion might have been

shaped——but not for him——fancy it where you will, 'tis no where so improper——'tis in no creature so unbecoming——

——But why so cold an assent to so in-contested a truth?——Perhaps thou hast reasons to be proud:——for heaven's sake let us hear them——Thou hast the advantages of birth and title to boast of——or thou standest in the sunshine of court favour——or thou hast a large fortune——or great talents——or much learning——or nature has bestowed her graces upon thy person——speak——on which of these foundations hast thou raised this fanciful structure?——Let us examine them.

Thou art well born:——then trust me, 'twill pollute no one drop of thy blood to be humble: humility calls no man down from his rank,——divests not princes of their titles; it is in life what the *clear obscure* is in painting; it makes the hero step forth in the canvas, and detaches his figure from the group in which he would otherwise stand confounded for ever.

If thou art rich——then shew the greatness of thy fortune,——or what is better,

the greatness of thy soul, in the meekness of thy conversation; condescend to men of low estate—support the distressed, and patronize the neglected.—Be great; but let it be in considering riches as they are; as *talents committed to an earthen vessel*—That thou art but the *receiver*,—and that to be obliged and to be vain too,—is but the old solecism of pride and beggary, which, though they often meet,—yet ever make but an absurd society.

If thou art powerful in interest, and standest deified by a fervile tribe of dependents,—why shouldest thou be proud,—because they are hungry?—Scourge me such sycophants: they have turned the heads of thousands as well as thine—

—But 'tis thy own dexterity and strength which have gained thee this eminence:—allow it; but art thou proud that thou standest in a place where thou art the mark of one man's envy, another man's malice, or a third man's revenge,—where good men may be ready to suspect thee, and whence bad men will be ready to pull thee down? I would be proud of nothing that is uncertain: Haman was

so, because he was admitted alone to queen Esther's banquet; and the distinction raised him,—but it was fifty cubits higher than he ever dream'd or thought of.

Let us pass on to the pretences of learning, &c. &c. If thou hast a little, thou wilt be proud of it in course: if thou hast much, and good sense along with it, there will be no reason to dispute against the passion: a beggarly parade of remnants is but a sorry object of Pride at the best;—but more so when we can cry out upon it, as the poor man did of his hatchet—* *Alas! Master,—for it was borrowed.*

It is treason to say the same of Beauty—whatever we do of the arts and ornaments with which Pride is wont to set it off: the weakest minds are most caught with both; being ever glad to win attention and credit from small and slender accidents, through disability of purchasing them by better means. In truth, beauty has so many charms, one knows

* 2 Kings, vi. 7.

not how to speak against it; and when it happens that a graceful figure is the habitation of a virtuous soul, when the beauty of the face speaks out the modesty and humility of the mind, and the justness of the proportion raises our thoughts up to the art and wisdom of the great Creator, something may be allowed it,——and something to the embellishments which set it off;—and yet, when the whole apology is read,——it will be found at last, that Beauty, like Truth, never is so glorious as when it goes the plainest.

Simplicity is the great friend to nature, and if I would be proud of any thing in this silly world, it should be of this honest alliance.

Consider what has been said; and may the God of all mercies and kindness watch over your passions, and inspire you *with all humbleness of mind, meekness, patience, and long suffering.*—Amen.

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plummet.

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Consider what has been said; and may
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SERMON XXV.

Humility.

MATTHEW, XI. 29.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

THE great business of man, is the regulation of his spirit; the possession of such a frame and temper of mind, as will lead us peaceably through this world, and in the many weary stages of it, afford us, what we shall be sure to stand in need of,——*Rest unto our souls.*

——*Rest unto our souls!*——'tis all we want—the end of all our wishes and pursuits: give us a prospect of this, we take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth to have it in possession: we seek for it in titles, in riches and pleasures—climb up after it by ambition,——come down again and stoop for it by avarice,——try all extremes;

still we are gone out of the way, nor is it, till after many miserable experiments, that we are convinced at last, we have been seeking every where for it, but where there is a prospect of finding it; and that is, within ourselves, in a meek and lowly disposition of heart. This, and this only, will give us rest unto our souls:—rest, from those turbulent and haughty passions which disturb our quiet:—rest, from the provocations and disappointments of the world, and a train of untold evils too long to be recounted, against all which this frame and preparation of mind is the best protection.

I beg you will go along with me in this argument. Consider how great a share of the uneasinesses which take up and torment our thoughts, owe their rise to nothing else, but the dispositions of mind which are opposite to this character.

With regard to the provocations and offences which are unavoidably happening to a man in his commerce with the world,—take it as a rule,—as a man's pride is,—so is always his displeasure;—as the opinion of himself rises,—

so does the injury,——so does his resentment: 'tis this which gives edge and force to the instrument which has struck him, ——and excites that heat in the wound which renders it incurable.

See how different the case is with the humble man: one half of these painful conflicts he actually escapes; the other part fall lightly on him:—he provokes no man by contempt; thrusts himself forward as the mark of no man's envy: so that he cuts off the first fretful occasions of the greatest part of these evils; and for those in which the passions of others would involve him, like the humble shrub in the valley, gently gives way, and scarce feels the injury of those stormy encounters which rend the proud cedar, and tear it up by its roots.

If you consider it with regard to the many disappointments of this life, which arise from the hopes of bettering our condition, and advancing in the world,—the reasoning is the same.

What we expect,——is ever in proportion to the estimate made of ourselves; when pride and self-love have brought us

in their account of this matter,——we find, that we are worthy of all honours——fit for all places and employments:——as our expectations rise and multiply, so must our disappointments with them; and there needs nothing more to lay the foundation of our unhappiness, and both to make and keep us miserable. And in truth there is nothing so common in life as to see thousands, who, you would say, had all the reason in the world to be at rest, so torn up and disquieted with sorrows of this class, and so incessantly tortured with the disappointments which their pride and passions have created for them, that though they appear to have all the ingredients of happiness in their hands,——they can neither compound or use them:—How should they? the goad is ever in their sides, and so hurries them on from one expectation to another, as to leave them no rest day or night.

Humility, therefore, recommends itself as a security against these heart-aches, which though ridiculous sometimes in the eye of the beholder, yet are serious enough to the man who suffers them,

and I believe would make no inconsiderable account in a true catalogue of the disquietudes of mortal man: against these, I say, Humility is the best defence.

He that is little in his own eyes, is little too in his desires, and consequently moderate in his pursuit of them: like another man he may fail in his attempts, and lose the point he aimed at,——but that is all,——he loses not himself,——he loses not his happiness and peace of mind with it,——even the contentions of the humble man are mild and placid.——Blessed character! when such a one is thrust back, who does not pity him?——when he falls, who would not stretch out a hand to raise him up?

And here, I cannot help stopping in the midst of this argument, to make a short observation, which is this. When we reflect upon the character of Humility,——we are apt to think it stands the most naked and defenceless of all virtues whatever,——the least able to support its claims against the insolent antagonist who seems ready to bear him down, and all

opposition which such a temper can make.

Now, if we consider him as standing alone,—no doubt, in such a case he will be overpowered and trampled upon by his opposer;—but if we consider the meek and lowly man, as he is—fenced and guarded by the love, the friendship, and wishes of all mankind,—that the other stands alone, hated, discountenanced, without one true friend or hearty well-wisher on his side;—when this is balanced, we shall have reason to change our opinion, and be convinced that the humble man, strengthened with such an alliance, is far from being so over-matched as at first sight he may appear;—nay I believe one might venture to go further and engage for it, that in all such cases, where real fortitude and true personal courage were wanted, he is much more likely to give proof of it, and I would sooner look for it in such a temper than in that of his adversary. Pride may make a man violent,—but Humility will make him firm:—and which of

the two, do you think, likely to come off with honour?—he, who acts from the changeable impulse of heated blood, and follows the uncertain motions of his pride and fury,—or the man who stands cool and collected in himself; who governs his resentments, instead of being governed by them, and on every occasion acts upon the steady motives of principle and duty?

But this by the way;—though in truth it falls in with the main argument; for if the observation is just, and Humility has the advantages where we should least expect them, the argument rises higher in behalf of those which are more apparently on its side.—In all which, if the humble man finds, what the proud man must never hope for in this world,—that is, *rest to his soul*,—so does he likewise meet with it from the influence such a temper has upon his condition under the evils of his life, not as chargeable upon the vices of men, but as the portion of his inheritance, by the appointment of God. For if, as Job says, we are born to trouble as the sparks fly up-

wards, surely it is he who thinks the greatest of these troubles below his sins, —and the smallest favours above his merit, that is likely to suffer the least from the one, and enjoy the most from the other: 'tis he who possesses his soul in meekness, and keeps it subjected to all the issues of fortune, that is the farthest out of their reach. — No. — He blames not the sun, though it does not ripen his vine, nor blusters at the winds, though they bring him no profit. — If the fountain of the humble man rises not as high as he could wish — he thinks, however, that it rises as high as it ought; and as the laws of nature still do their duty, that he has no cause to complain against them.

— If disappointed of riches — he knows the providence of God is not his debtor; that though he has received less than others, yet as he thinks himself less than the least, he has reason to be thankful.

If the world goes untoward with the humble man, in other respects, — he knows a truth which the proud man does never acknowledge, and that is, that the world

was not made for him ; and therefore how little share soever he has of its advantages, he sees an argument of content, in reflecting how little it is, that a compound of sin, of ignorance, and frailty, has grounds to expect.

A soul thus turned and resigned, is carried smoothly down the stream of providence ; no temptations in his passage disquiet him with desire, — no dangers alarm him with fear : though open to all the changes and chances of others, — yet by seeing the justice of what happens, — and humbly giving way to the blow, — though he is smitten, he is not smitten like other men, or feels the smart which they do.

Thus much for the doctrine of Humility ; let us now look towards the example of it.

It is observed by some one, that as pride was the passion through which sin and misery entered into the world, and gave our enemy the triumph of ruining our nature, that therefore the Son of God, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, when he entered upon

the work of our restoration, he began at the very point where he knew we had failed; and this he did by endeavouring to bring the soul of man back to its original temper of Humility; so that his first public address from the Mount began with a declaration of blessedness to the poor in spirit,——and almost his last exhortation in the text, was to copy the fair original he had set them of this virtue, and to *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart.*

It is the most unanswerable appeal that can be made to the heart of man,——and so persuasive and accommodated to all Christians, that as much pride as there is still in the world, it is not credible but that every believer must receive some tincture of the character or bias towards it from the example of so great, and yet so humble a Master, whose whole course of life was a particular lecture to this one virtue; and in every instance of it shewed, that he came not to share the pride and glories of life, or swell the hopes of ambitious followers, but to cast a damp upon them for ever, by appearing himself

rather as a servant than a master,——coming, as he continually declared, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and as the Prophet had foretold in that mournful description of him,——to have no form or comeliness, nor any beauty that they should desire him. The voluntary meanness of his birth,——the poverty of his life,——the low offices in which it was engaged, in preaching the Gospel to the poor,——the inconveniences which attended the execution of it, in having no where to lay his head,——all spoke the same language:——that the God of truth should submit to the suspicion of an imposture:—his humble deportment under that, and a thousand provocations of a thankless people, still raises this character higher;—and what exalts it to its highest pitch,——the tender and pathetic proof he gave of the same disposition at the conclusion and great catastrophe of his sufferings,——when a life full of so many instances of humility was crowned with the most endearing one of *humbling himself even to the death of the cross*;—the death of a slave, a malefactor

—dragged to *Calvary*, without opposition—insulted without complaint.—

—Blessed JESUS! how can the man who calls upon thy name, but learn of thee to be meek and lowly in heart?—how can he but profit when such a lesson was seconded—by such an example?

If humility shines so bright in the character of CHRIST, so does it in that of his religion; the true spirit of which tends all the same way.—Christianity, when rightly explained and practised, is all meekness and candour, and love and courtesy: and there is no one passion our SAVIOUR rebukes so often, or with so much sharpness, as that one, which is subversive of these kind effects,—and that is pride, which in proportion as it governs us, necessarily leads us on to a discourteous opinion and treatment of others.—

I say *necessarily*,—because 'tis a natural consequence, and the progress from the one to the other is unavoidable.

This our SAVIOUR often remarks in the character of the Pharisees:—they trusted in themselves,—'twas no wonder then they despised others.

This, I believe, might principally relate to spiritual pride, which, by the way, is the worst of all prides; and as it is a very bad species of a very bad passion, I cannot do better than conclude the discourse with some remarks upon it.

In most conceits of a religious superiority, there has usually gone hand in hand with it, another fancy,——which——I suppose has fed it;——and that is, a persuasion of some more than ordinary aids and illuminations from above.——Let us examine this matter.

That the influence and assistance of God's spirit in a way imperceptible to us, does enable us to render him an acceptable service, we learn from Scripture——In what particular manner this is effected, so that the act shall still be imputed ours——the Scripture says not: we know only the account is so; but as for any sensible demonstrations of its workings to be felt as such within us——the word of God is utterly silent; nor can that silence be supplied by any experience.——We have none; unless you call the false pretences to it such,——

suggested by an enthusiastic or distempered fancy. As expressly as we are told and pray for the inspiration of God's spirit, there are no boundaries fixed, nor can any be ever marked, to distinguish them from the efforts and determinations of our own reason : and as firmly as most Christians believe the effects of them upon their hearts, I may venture to affirm, that since the promises were made, there never was a Christian of a cool head and sound judgment, that, in any instance of a change of life, would presume to say, which part of his reformation was owing to divine help, — or which to the operations of his own mind ; or who, upon looking back, would pretend to strike the line, and say, “ here it was that my own “ reflections ended ; ” — and at this point the suggestions of the Spirit of God began to take place.

However backwards the world has been in former ages in the discovery of such points as God never meant us to know, — we have been more successful in our own days : — thousands can trace out now the impressions of this divine inter-

course in themselves, from the first moment they received it, and with such distinct intelligence of its progress and workings, as to require no evidence of its truth.

It must be owned, that the present age has not altogether the honour of this discovery;—there were too many grounds given to improve on in the religious cant of the last century;—when the *in-comings*, *in-dwellings*, and *out-lettings* of the Spirit, were the subjects of so much edification; and when, as they do now, the most illiterate mechanics, who, as a witty divine said of them, were much fitter to *make* a pulpit, than get into one, were yet able so to frame their nonsense to the nonsense of the times, as to beget an opinion in their followers, not only that they pray'd and preach'd by inspiration, but that the most common actions of their lives were set about in the Spirit of the LORD.

The tenets of the quakers (a harmless quiet people) are collateral descendents from the same enthusiastic original; and their accounts and way of reasoning upon their inward light and spiritual wor-

ship, are much the same; which last they carry thus much further, as to believe the Holy Ghost comes down upon their assemblies, and *moves* them, without regard to condition or sex, to make intercessions with unutterable groans.

So that, in fact, the opinions of methodists, upon which I was first entering, is but a republication with some alterations of the same extravagant conceits; and as enthusiasm generally speaks the same language in all ages, 'tis but too sadly verified in this; for though we have not yet got to the old terms of the incomings and in-dwellings of the Spirit, — yet we have arrived at the first feelings of its entrance, recorded with as particular an exactness as an act of filiation, — so that numbers will tell you the identical place — the day of the month, and the hour of the night, when the Spirit came in upon them, and took possession of their hearts.

Now there is this inconvenience on our side, That there is no arguing with a frenzy of this kind: for unless a representation of the case be a confutation of

its folly to them, they must for ever be led captive by a delusion, from which no reasoner can redeem them: for if you should inquire, upon what evidence so strange a persuasion is grounded? — they will tell you, “ They feel it is so.” — If you reply, That this is no conviction to you, who do not feel it like them, and therefore would wish to be satisfied by what tokens they are able to distinguish such emotions from those of fancy and complexion? they will answer, That the manner of it is incommunicable by human language, but ’tis a matter of fact, — they feel its operations as plain and distinct, as the natural sensations of pleasure, or the pains of a disorder’d body. — And since I have mention’d a disorder’d body, I cannot help suggesting, that amongst the more serious and deluded of this sect, ’tis much to be doubted whether a disorder’d body has not oft-times as great a share in letting in these conceits as a disorder’d mind.

When a poor disconsolated drooping creature is terrified from all enjoyment, — prays without ceasing till his imagination

is heated,—fasts and mortifies and mopes, till his body is in as bad a plight as his mind; is it a wonder, that the mechanical disturbances and conflicts of an empty belly, interpreted by an empty head, should be mistook for workings of a different kind from what they are; —or that in such a situation, where the mind sits upon the watch for extraordinary occurrences, and the imagination is pre-engaged on its side, is it strange if every commotion should help to fix him in this malady, and make him a fitter subject for the treatment of a Physician than a Divine?

In many cases, they seem so much above the skill of either, that unless God in his mercy rebuke this lying spirit, and call it back,—it may go on and persuade millions into their destruction.

XXVI [267]

SERMON XXVI.

Advantages of Christianity to the World.

ROMANS, I. 22.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

THERE is no one project to which the whole race of mankind is so universally a bubble, as to that of being thought wise : and the affectation of it is so visible, in men of all complexions, that you every day see some one or other so very solicitous to establish the character, as not to allow himself leisure to do the things which fairly win it ; —expending more art and stratagem to appear so in the eyes of the world, than what would suffice to make him so in truth.

It is owing to the force of this desire, that you see in general, there is no injury touches a man so sensibly, as an insult upon his parts and capacity : tell a man

of other defects, that he wants learning, industry or application,——he will hear your reproof with patience.——Nay you may go further : take him in a proper season, you may tax his morals,——you may tell him he is irregular in his conduct,——passionate or revengeful in his nature—loose in his principles ;——deliver it with the gentleness of a friend,——possibly he'll not only bear with you,——but, if ingenuous, he will thank you for your lecture, and promise a reformation ;——but hint——hint but at a defect in his intellectuals,——touch but that sore place,——from that moment you are look'd upon as an enemy sent to torment him before his time, and in return may reckon upon his resentment and ill-will for ever ; so that in general you will find it safer to tell a man, he is a knave than a fool,——and stand a better chance of being forgiven, for proving he has been wanting in a point of common honesty, than a point of common sense.

Strange souls that we are ! as if to live well was not the greatest argument of Wisdom ;——and, as if what reflected

upon our morals, did not most of all reflect upon our understandings!

This, however, is a reflection we make a shift to overlook in the heat of this pursuit; and though we all covet this great character of Wisdom, there is scarce any point wherein we betray more folly than in our judgments concerning it; rarely bringing this precious ore either to the test or the balance; and though 'tis of the last consequence not to be deceived in it,—we generally take it upon trust,——seldom suspect the quality, but never the quantity of what has fallen to our lot. So that however inconsistent a man shall be in his opinions of this, and what absurd measures soever he takes in consequence of it, in the conduct of his life,—he still speaks comfort to his soul; and like Solomon, when he had least pretence for it,—in the midst of his nonsense will cry out and say,——*That all my wisdom remaineth with me.*

Where then is wisdom to be found? and where is the place of understanding?

The politicians of this world, *professing themselves wise*,——admit of no other

claims of wisdom but the knowledge of men and business, the understanding the interests of states,——the intrigues of courts——the finding out the passions and weaknesses of foreign ministers——and turning them and all events to their country's glory and advantage.——

——Not so the little man of this world, who thinks the main point of wisdom, is to take care of himself;——to be wise in his generation;——to make use of the opportunity whilst he has it, of raising a fortune, and heraldizing a name.

——Far wide is the speculative and studious man (whose office is in the clouds) from such little ideas:——Wisdom dwells with him in finding out the secrets of nature;——founding the depths of arts and sciences;——measuring the heavens; telling the number of the stars, and calling them all by their names: so that when in our busy imaginations we have built and unbuilt again *God's stories in the heavens*,——and fancy we have found out the point whereon to fix the foundations of the earth; and in the language of the book of Job have searched out the cor-

ner-stone thereof, we think our titles to wisdom built upon the same basis with those of our knowledge, and that they will continue for ever.

The mistake of these pretenders is shewn at large by the Apostle, in the chapter from which the text is taken, — *Professing themselves WISE*, — in which expression (by the way) St. Paul is thought to allude to the vanity of the Greeks and Romans, who being great encouragers of arts and learning, which they had carried to extraordinary heights, considered all other nations as *Barbarians*, in respect of themselves; and amongst whom, particularly the Greeks, the men of study and inquiry had assumed to themselves, with great indecorum, the title of the Wise-men.

With what parade and ostentation forever this was made out, it had the fate to be attended with one of the most mortifying abatements which could happen to Wisdom; and that was an ignorance of those points which most concerned man to know.

This he shews from the general state of the Gentile world, in the great article of their misconceptions of the Deity — and, as wrong notions produce wrong actions, — of the duties and services they owed to him, and in course of what they owed to one another.

For though, as he argues in the foregoing verses, — *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world might be clearly seen and understood, by the things that are made*; — that is, — Though God, by the clearest discovery of himself, had ever laid before mankind such evident proofs of his eternal Being, — his infinite powers and perfections, so that what is to be known of his invisible nature, might all along be traced by the marks of his goodness, — and the visible frame and order of the world: — yet so utterly were they without excuse, — that though they knew God, and saw his image and superscription in every part of his works, — *yet they glorified him not.* — So bad a use did they make of the powers given them for this great discovery, that instead

of adoring the Being thus manifested to them, in purity and truth, they fell into the most gross and absurd delusions, — *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible men — to birds, — to four-footed beasts and creeping things; — Professing themselves to be wise, — they became fools. —* All their specious wisdom was but a more glittering kind of ignorance, and ended in the most dishonourable of all mistakes, — in setting up fictitious gods, to receive the tribute of their adoration and thanks.

The fountain of religion being thus poisoned, no wonder the stream shewed its effects, which are charged upon them in the following words, where he describes the heathen world *as full of all unrighteousness, — fornication, — covetousness, — malicioufness, — full of murder, — envy, — debate, — malignity, — whisperers, — backbiters, — haters of God, — proud, — boasters, — inventors of evil things, — disobedient to parents, — without understanding, without natural affection, — implacable, — unmerci-*

ful?—God in heaven defend us from such a catalogue!

—But these disorders, if fairly considered, you'll say, have in no ages arisen so much from want of light, as a want of disposition to follow the light which God has ever imparted: that the law written in their hearts was clear and express enough for any reasonable creatures, and would have directed them, had they not suffered their passions more forcibly to direct them otherwise: that if we are to judge from this effect, namely, the corruption of the world, the same prejudice will recur even against the Christian religion; since mankind have at least been as wicked in later days, as in the more remote and simple ages of the world; and that, if we may trust to facts, there are no vices which the Apostle fixes upon the heathen world, before the preaching of the Gospel, which may not be paralleled by as black a catalogue of vices in the Christian world since.

This necessarily brings us to an inquiry, Whether Christianity has done the world

any service?—and, How far the morals of it have been made better since this system has been embraced?

In litigating this, one might oppose facts to facts to the end of the world, without coming one jot nearer the point. Let us see how far their mistakes concerning the Deity, will throw light upon the subject.

That there was one supreme Being who made this world, and who ought to be worshipped by his creatures, is the foundation of all religion, and so obvious a truth in nature,—that Reason, as the Apostle acknowledges, was always able to discover it: and yet it seems strange, that the same faculty which made the discovery, should be so little able to keep true to its own judgment, and support it long against the prejudices of wrong heads, and the propensity of weak ones, towards idolatry and a multiplicity of gods.

For want of something to have gone hand in hand with reason, and fixed the persuasion for ever upon their minds, that there was in truth but one God the Ma-

ker and Supporter of Heaven and Earth, infinite in wisdom, and knowledge, and all perfections;—how soon was this simple idea lost, and mankind led to dispose of these attributes inherent in the Godhead, and divide and subdivide them again amongst deities, which their own dreams had given substance to;—his eternal power and dominion parcell'd out to gods of the land,——to gods of the sea, to gods of the infernal regions: whilst the great God of gods, and LORD of lords, who ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world,——who is so great that nought is able to controul or withstand his power, was supposed to rest contented with his allotment, and to want power to act within such parts of his empire, as they dismembered and assigned to others.

If the number of their gods and this partition of their power, would lessen the idea of their majesty, What must be the opinions of their origin? When instead of that glorious description, which Scripture gives of “The Ancient of days who inhabiteth eternity,”——they gravely

assigned particular times and places for the births and education of their gods; so that there was scarce a hamlet or even a desert in Greece or Italy, which was not rendered memorable by some favour or accident of this kind.

And what rendered such conceits the more gross and absurd,——they supposed not only that the gods they worshipped had a beginning, but that they were produced by fleshly parents, and accordingly they attributed to them corporeal shapes and difference of sex: and indeed in this they were a little consistent, for their deities seemed to partake so much of the frailties to which flesh and blood is subject, that their history and their pedigree were much of a piece, and might reasonably claim each other. For they imputed to them not only the human defects of ignorance, want, fear, and the like, but the most unmanly sensualities, and what would be a reproach to human nature, ——such as cruelty, adulteries, rapes, incest: and even in the accounts which we have from the sublimest of their poets, ——what are they, but anecdotes of their

squabbles amongst themselves—their intrigues, their jealousies, their ungovernable transports of choler,—nay, even their thefts—their drunkenness, and bloodshed?

Here let us stop a moment and inquire, what was Reason doing all this time, to be so miserably insulted and abused? Where held she her empire whilst her bulwarks were thus borne down, and her first principles of religion and truth lay buried under them? If she was able by herself to regain the power she had lost, and put a stop to this folly and confusion, —why did she not? if she was not able to resist this torrent alone,—the point is given up—she wanted aid; and revelation has given it.

But though reason, you'll say, could not overthrow these popular mistakes, —yet it saw the folly of them, and was at all times able to disprove them.

No doubt it was; and it is certain too, that the more diligent inquirers after truth, did not in fact fall into these absurd notions, which, by the way, is an observation more to our purpose than

theirs, who usually make it, and shews that though their reasonings were good, that there always wanted something which they could not supply to give them such weight, as would lay an obligation upon mankind to embrace them, and make that to be a law, which otherwise was but an opinion without force.

Besides——which is a more direct answer,——though 'tis true the ablest men gave no credit to the multiplicity of gods, ——(for they had a religion for themselves, and another for the populace) yet they were guilty of what in effect was equally bad, in holding an opinion which necessarily supported these very mistakes, ——namely, that as different nations had different gods, it was every man's duty (I suppose more for quietness than principle's sake) to worship the gods of his country; which, by the way, considering their numbers, was not so easy a task, ——for what with celestial gods, and gods aërial, terrestrial and infernal, with the goddesses, their wives and mistresses, upon the lowest computation, the heathen world acknowledged no less than thirty

thousand deities, all which claimed the rights and ceremonies of religious worship.

But 'twill be said, allowing the bulk of mankind were under such delusions,——they were still but speculative.——

What was that to their practice? however defective in their theology and more abstracted points, their morality was no way connected with it.——There is no need, that the everlasting laws of justice and mercy should be fetched down from above,——since they can be proved from more obvious mediums;——they were as necessary for the same good purposes of society then as now; and we may presume they saw their interest and pursued it.

That the necessities of society, and the impossibilities of its subsisting otherwise, would point out the convenience, or if you will,——the duty of social virtues, is unquestionable:—but I firmly deny, that therefore religion and morality are independent of each other: they appear so far from it, that I cannot conceive how the one, in the true and meritorious sense of the duty, can act without the influence of the other: surely the

most exalted motive which can only be depended upon for the uniform practice of virtue,—must come down from above,—from the love and imitation of the goodness of that Being in whose sight we wish to render ourselves acceptable: this will operate at all times and all places, —in the darkest closet as much as on the greatest and most public theatres of the world.

But with different conceptions of the Deity, or such impure ones as they entertained, is it to be doubted whether in the many secret trials of our virtue, we should not determine our cases of conscience with much the same kind of casuistry as that of the Libertine in Terence, who being engaged in a very unjustifiable pursuit, and happening to see a picture which represented a known story of Jupiter in a like transaction,—argued the matter thus within himself. — If the great Jupiter could not restrain his appetites, and deny himself an indulgence of this kind—*ego Homuncio hoc non facerem?* shall I a mortal,—an inconsiderable mortal too, cloathed with infirmities

of flesh and blood,—pretend to a virtue, which the Father of gods and men could not? What insolence!

The conclusion was natural enough; and as so great a master of nature puts it into the mouth of one of his principal characters, no doubt the language was then understood; it was copied from common life, and was not the first application which had been made of the story.

It will scarce admit of a question, Whether vice would not naturally grow bold upon the credit of such an example; or whether such impressions did not influence the lives and morals of many in the heathen world; and had there been no other proof of it, but the natural tendency of such notions to corrupt them, it had been sufficient reason to believe it was so.

No doubt, there is sufficient room for amendment in the Christian world, and we may be said to be a very corrupt and bad generation of men, considering what motives we have from the purity of our religion, and the force of its sanctions, to make us better:—yet still I affirm,

if these restraints were taken off, the world would be infinitely worse; and though some sense of morality might be preserved, as it was in the heathen world, with the more considerate of us, yet in general I am persuaded, that the bulk of mankind, upon such a supposition, would soon come to *live without GOD in the world*, and in a short time differ from Indians themselves in little else but their complexions.

If, after all, the Christian religion has not left a sufficient provision against the wickedness of the world,—the short and true answer is this, That there can be none.

It is sufficient to leave us without excuse, that the excellency of this institution in its doctrine, its precepts, and its examples, has a proper tendency to make us a virtuous and a happy people;—every page is an address to our hearts to win them to these purposes;—but as religion was not intended to work upon men by force and natural necessity, but by moral persuasion, which sets good and evil before them,—so that if men have power to do the evil and chuse the good,

——and will abuse it,——this cannot be avoided.——Religion even implies a freedom of choice, and all the beings in the world which have it, were created free to stand and free to fall;——and therefore men who will not be persuaded by this way of address, must expect, and be contented to be reckoned with according to the talents they have received.

S E R M O N XXVII.

The Abuses of Conscience considered.

HEBREWS, XIII. 18.

—For we trust we have a good Conscience.—

TRUST!—Trust we have a good Conscience!—Surely you will say, if there is any thing in this life which a man may depend upon, and to the knowledge of which he is capable of arriving upon the most indisputable evidence, it must be this very thing,—Whether he has a good Conscience, or no.

If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a stranger to the true state of this account:—He must be privy to his own thoughts and desires—He must remember his past pursuits, and know certainly the true springs and motives, which, in general, have governed the actions of his life.

91 In other matters we may be deceived by false appearances; and as the wise man complains, *Hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us*:——but here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself:——is conscious of the web she has wove:——knows its texture and fineness; and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon the several designs, which virtue or vice has plann'd before her.

Now,——as Conscience is nothing else but the knowledge which the mind has within itself of this; and the judgment, either of approbation or censure, which it unavoidably makes upon the successive actions of our lives,——'tis plain, you will say, from the very terms of the proposition, whenever this inward testimony goes against a man, and he stands self-accused,—that he must necessarily be a *guilty man*. And, on the contrary, when the report is favourable on his side, and his heart condemns him not,——that it

is not a matter of *trust*, as the Apostle intimates, but a matter of certainty and fact, that the *Conscience is good*, and that the *man* must be *good* also.

At first sight, this may seem to be a true state of the case; and I make no doubt but the knowledge of right and wrong is so truly impress'd upon the mind of man; that did no such thing ever happen, as that the Conscience of a man, by long habits of sin, might (as the Scripture assures us it may) insensibly become hard; and like some tender parts of his body, by much stress, and continual hard usage, lose, by degrees, that nice sense and perception with which God and nature endowed it:—Did this never happen:—or was it certain that self-love could never hang the least bias upon the judgment:—or that the little interests below could rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions, and encompass them about with clouds and thick darkness:—could no such thing as favour and affection enter this sacred court:—~~—~~ did WIT disdain to take a bribe in it, or was ashamed to shew its face as an

advocate for an unwarrantable enjoyment :—or, lastly, were we assured that INTEREST stood always unconcern'd whilst the cause was hearing,—and that PASSION never got into the judgment-seat, and pronounced sentence in the stead of Reason, which is supposed always to preside and determine upon the case :—was this truly so, as the objection must suppose, no doubt, then, the religious and moral state of a man would be exactly what he himself esteemed it; and the guilt or innocence of every man's life could be known, in general, by no better measure, than the degrees of his own approbation or censure.

I own, in one case, whenever a man's Conscience does accuse him (as it seldom errs on that side) that he is guilty; and, unless in melancholy and hypochondriac cases, we may safely pronounce that there is always sufficient grounds for the accusation.

But, the converse of the proposition will not hold true,—namely, That wherever there is guilt, the Conscience must accuse; and, if it does not, that a

man is therefore innocent.—This is not fact:—so that the common consolation which some good Christian or other is hourly administering to himself, —That he thanks God his mind does not misgive him; and that consequently, he has a good Conscience, because he has a quiet one—As current as the inference is, and as infallible as the rule appears at first sight, yet, when you look nearer to it, and try the truth of this rule upon plain facts, you find it liable to so much error, from a false application of it: —the principle on which it goes so often perverted:—the whole force of it lost, and sometimes so vilely cast away, that it is painful to produce the common examples from human life, which confirm this account.

A man shall be vicious and utterly debauched in his principles; exceptionable in his conduct to the world: shall live shameless,—in the open commission of a sin which no reason or pretence can justify;—a sin, by which, contrary to all the workings of humanity within, he shall

ruin for ever the deluded partner of his guilt;—rob her of her best dowry;—and not only cover her own head with dishonour, but involve a whole virtuous family in shame and sorrow for her sake.—Surely,—you'll think, Conscience must lead such a man a troublesome life:—he can have no rest night or day from its reproaches.

Alas! Conscience had something else to do all this time than break in upon him: as *Elijah* reproached the god *Baal*, this domestic god was either talking, or pursuing, or was in a journey, or, peradventure, he slept, and could not be awake. Perhaps he was gone out in company with HONOUR, to fight a duel;—to pay off some debt at play;—or dirty annuity, the bargain of his lust.—Perhaps, Conscience all this time was engaged at home, talking aloud against petty larceny, and executing vengeance upon some such puny crimes as his fortune and rank in life secured him against all temptation of committing:—so that he lives as merrily,—sleeps as soundly in his

bed;—and, at the last, meets death with as much unconcern,—perhaps, much more so, than a much better man.

Another is fordid, unmerciful;—a strait-hearted, selfish wretch, incapable either of private friendships, or public spirit.—Take notice how he passes by the widow and orphan in their distress; and sees all the miseries incident to human life without a sigh or a prayer.—Shall not Conscience rise up and sting him on such occasions? No.—Thank God, there is no occasion. ‘I pay every man his own,—I have no fornication to answer to my Conscience, no faithless vows or promises to make up, I have debauch’d no man’s wife or child. —Thank God, I am not as other men, adulterers, unjust, or even as this libertine who stands before me.’

A third is crafty and designing in his nature.—View his whole life,—’tis nothing else but a cunning contexture of dark arts and unequitable subterfuges, basely to defeat the true intent of all laws, plain-dealing, and the safe enjoyment of our several properties.—You

will see such a one working out a frame of little designs upon the ignorance and perplexities of the poor and needy man: — shall raise a fortune upon the inexperience of a youth, — or the unsuspecting temper of his friend, who would have trusted him with his life. When old age comes on, and repentance calls him to look back upon this black account, and state it over again with his Conscience — Conscience looks into the *Statutes at Large*, — finds perhaps no *express law* broken by what he has done; — perceives no penalty or forfeiture incurr'd; — sees no scourge waving over his head, — or prison opening its gate upon him — What is there to affright his Conscience? — Conscience has got safely entrenched behind the letter of the law, sits there invulnerable, fortified with *cases* and *reports* so strongly on all sides, — that 'tis not preaching can dispossess it of its hold.

Another shall want even this refuge, — shall break through all this ceremony of flow, chicane; scorns the doubtful workings of secret plots and cautious

trains to bring about his purpose. — See the barefaced villain how he cheats, lies, perjures, robs, murders, — horrid! But indeed much better was not to be expected in this case, — the poor man was in the dark! — His priest had got the keeping of his Conscience, and all he had let him know of it was, That he must believe in the *Pope*; — go to mass; — cross himself; — tell his beads; — be a good Catholic; and that this in all conscience was enough to carry him to heaven. What? — if he perjures? — Why, — he had a mental reservation in it. But if he is so wicked and abandoned a wretch as you represent him, — if he robs or murders, will not Conscience, on every such act, receive a wound itself? — Ay — But the man has carried it to confession, the wound digests there, and will do well enough, — and in a short time be quite healed up by absolution.

O *Popery*! what hast thou to answer for? — when not content with the too many natural and fatal ways through

which the heart is every day thus treacherous to itself above all things,——thou hast wilfully set open this wide gate of deceit before the face of this unwary Traveller,——too apt, God knows, to go astray of himself,——and confidently speak peace to his soul, when there is no peace.

Of this the common instances, which I have drawn out of life, are too notorious to require much evidence. If any man doubts the reality of them, or thinks it impossible for man to be such a bubble to himself,—I must refer him a moment to his reflections, and shall then venture to trust the appeal with his own heart. Let him consider in how different a degree of detestation numbers of wicked actions stand *there*, though equally bad and vicious in their own natures——he will soon find that such of them as strong inclination or custom have prompted him to commit, are generally dress'd out and painted with all the false beauties which a soft and flattering hand can give them; and that the others to which he feels no

propensity, appear, at once, naked and deformed, surrounded with all the true circumstances of folly and dishonour.

When David surpris'd Saul sleeping in the cave, and cut off the skirt of his robe,——we read, his heart smote him for what he had done.——But, in the matter of Uriah, where a faithful and gallant servant, whom he ought to have loved and honour'd, fell to make way for his lust; where *Conscience* had so much greater reason to take the alarm,——his heart smote him not.——A whole year had almost pass'd from the first commission of that crime——to the time Nathan was sent to reprove him; and we read not once of the least sorrow or compunction of heart, which he testified during all that time, for what he had done.

Thus Conscience, this once able monitor,——placed on high as a judge within us,——and intended, by our Maker, as a just and equitable one too,——by an unhappy train of causes and impediments,——takes often such imperfect cognizance of what passes,——does its office so negligently,——sometimes so corruptly,

that it is not to be trusted alone: and therefore, we find, there is a necessity, an absolute necessity, of joining another principle with it, to aid, if not govern, its determinations.

So that if you would form a just judgment of what is of infinite importance to you not to be misled in, namely, in what degree of real merit you stand, either as an honest man,——an useful citizen,——a faithful subject to your king,——or a good servant to your GOD——call in RELIGION and MORALITY.——Look——What is written in the law of GOD?——How readest thou?——Consult calm reason, and the unchangeable obligations of justice and truth,——What say they?

Let Conscience determine the matter upon these reports,——and then, if *thy heart condemn thee not*,——which is the case the Apostle supposes,——the rule will be infallible——*Thou wilt have confidence towards God*;——that is, have just grounds to believe the judgment thou hast past upon thyself, is the judgment of GOD; and nothing else but an anticipation of that righteous sentence, which

will be pronounced, hereafter, upon thee by that BEING, before whom thou art finally to give an account of thy actions.

Blessed is the man, indeed then, as the Author of the book of Ecclesiasticus expresses it, who is not pricked with the multitude of his sins.—Blessed is the man whose heart hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his hope in the Lord. Whether he be rich, continues he, or whether he be poor,—if he have a good heart (a heart thus guided and inform'd)—He shall at all times rejoice in a cheerful countenance—His mind shall tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above upon a tower on high.—In the darkest doubts it shall conduct him safer than a thousand Casuists, and give the state he lives in, a better security for his behaviour, than all the clauses and restrictions put together, which the wisdom of the legislature is forced to multiply,—forced, I say, as things stand; human laws being not a matter of original choice, but of pure necessity, brought in to fence against the mischievous effects of those Consciences

which are no law unto themselves: wisely intending by the many provisions made, That in all such corrupt or misguided cases, where principle and the checks of Conscience will not make us upright, —to supply their force, and by the terrors of jails and halters oblige us to it.

To have the fear of God before our eyes; and, in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal measures of right and wrong: — the first of these will comprehend the duties of religion: the second those of morality: which are so inseparably connected together, that you cannot divide these two *Tables*, even in imagination (though the attempt is often made in practice), without breaking and mutually destroying them both.

I said the attempt is often made; — and so it is; — there being nothing more common than to see a man, who has no sense at all of religion, — and indeed has *so much* of honesty, as to pretend to none; who would yet take it as the bitterest affront, should you but hint

at a suspicion of his moral character,——
or imagine he was not conscientiously just,
and scrupulous to the uttermost mite.

When there is some appearance that
it is so,—— though one is not willing even
to suspect the appearance of so great a
virtue, as moral honesty;—yet were we
to look into the grounds of it in the pre-
sent case, I am persuaded we should find
little reason to envy such a man the ho-
nour of his motive.

Let him declaim as pompously as he
can on the subject, it will be found at last
to rest upon no better foundation than
either his interest, his pride, his ease; or
some such little and changeable passion,
as will give us but small dependence upon
his actions in matters of great stress.

Give me leave to illustrate this by an
example.

I know the banker I deal with, or the
physician I usually call in, to be neither
of them men of much religion: I hear
them make a jest of it every day, and
treat all its sanctions with so much scorn
and contempt, as to put the matter past
doubt. Well,——notwithstanding this I

put my fortune into the hands of the one, —and, what is dearer still to me, I trust my life to the honest skill of the other. —Now, let me examine what is my reason for this great confidence. —Why, —in the first place, I believe that there is no probability that either of them will employ the power, I put into their hands, to my disadvantage. I consider that honesty serves the purposes of this life, —I know their success in the world depends upon the fairness of their character; —that they cannot hurt me without hurting themselves more.

But put it otherwise, namely, that interest lay for once on the other side. —That a case should happen wherein the one, without stain to his reputation, could secrete my fortune, and leave me naked in the world: —or that the other could send me out of it, and enjoy an estate by my death, without dishonour to himself or his art. —In this case what hold have I of either of them? —Religion, the strongest of all motives, is out of the question. —Interest, the next most powerful motive in this world, is strongly

against me.—I have nothing left to cast into the scale to balance this temptation. —I must lie at the mercy of honour, —or some such capricious principle. —Strait security! for two of my best and most valuable blessings,—my property and my life!

As therefore we can have no dependence upon morality without religion;—so, on the other hand, there is nothing better to be expected from religion without morality; nor can any man be supposed to discharge his duties to God, (whatever fair appearances he may hang out, that he does so,) if he does not pay as conscientious a regard to the duties which he owes his fellow-creature.

This is a point capable in itself of strict demonstration. —Nevertheless, 'tis no rarity to see a man whose real moral merit stands very low, who yet entertains the highest notion of himself, in the light of a devout and religious man. He shall not only be covetous, revengeful, implacable,—but even wanting in points of common honesty.—Yet because he talks loud against the infidelity of the age,—

is zealous for some points of religion,
——goes twice a day to church, attends
the sacraments, and amuses himself with
a few instrumental duties of religion,
——shall cheat his conscience into a judgment that for this he is a religious man, and has discharged faithfully his duty to God: and you will find that such a man, through force of this delusion, generally looks down with spiritual pride upon every other man who has less affectation of piety, though, perhaps, ten times more moral honesty than himself.

This is likewise a sore evil under the sun; and I believe there is no one mistaken principle which, for its time, has wrought more serious mischiefs. For a general proof of this, examine the history of the Romish church.—See what scenes of cruelty, murders, rapines, bloodshed, have all been sanctified by a religion not strictly governed by morality.

In how many kingdoms of the world, has the crusading sword of this misguided Saint-Errant spared neither age, or merit, or sex, or condition!——And, as he fought under the banners of a religion,

which set him loose from justice and humanity,——he shewed none,——mercilessly trampled upon both, heard neither the cries of the unfortunate, nor pitied their distresses.

If the testimony of past centuries in this matter is not sufficient,——consider at this instant, how the votaries of that religion are every day thinking to do service and honour to God, by actions which are a dishonour and scandal to themselves.

To be convinced of this, go with me for a moment into the prisons of the inquisition.——Behold *religion* with mercy and justice chain'd down under her feet,——there sitting ghastly upon a black tribunal, propp'd up with racks and instruments of torment.——Hark!——What a piteous groan!—See the melancholy wretch who utter'd it, just brought forth to undergo the anguish of a mock-trial, and endure the utmost pains that a studied system of *religious cruelty* has been able to invent. Behold this helpless victim delivered up to his tormentors. His body so wasted with sorrow and long

confinement, you'll see every nerve and muscle as it suffers.——Observe the last movement of that horrid engine.——What convulsions it has thrown him into. Consider the nature of the posture in which he now lies stretch'd.——What exquisite torture he endures by it.—'Tis all nature can bear.——Good God! see how it keeps his weary soul hanging upon his trembling lips, willing to take its leave,——but not suffered to depart. Behold the unhappy wretch led back to his cell,——dragg'd out of it again to meet the flames,——and the insults in his last agonies, which this principle——this principle that there can be religion without morality, has prepared for him.

The surest way to try the merit of any disputed notion,——is to trace down the consequences such a notion has produced, and compare them with the *spirit* of Christianity.——'Tis the short and decisive rule, which our SAVIOUR has left for these and such like cases,——and is worth a thousand arguments.—*By their fruits, says he, ye shall know them.*

Thus religion and morality, like fast friends and natural allies, can never be set at variance, without the mutual ruin and dishonour of them both; — and whoever goes about this unfriendly office, is no well-wisher to either, — and whatever he pretends, he deceives his own heart, and, I fear, his morality, as well as his religion, will be vain.

I will add no farther to the length of this discourse, than by two or three short and independent rules, deducible from what has been said.

1st, Whenever a man talks loudly against religion, always suspect that it is not his reason, but his passions which have got the better of his creed. — A *bad life* and a *good belief* are disagreeable and troublesome neighbours, and where they separate, depend upon it, 'tis for no other cause but quietness sake.

2^{dly}, When a man thus represented, tells you in any particular instance, that such a thing goes *against* his conscience, — always believe he means exactly the same thing as when he tells you such a thing goes against his stomach, — a pre-

sent want of appetite being generally the true cause of both.

In a word,——trust that man in nothing,——who has not a conscience in every thing.

And in your own case remember this plain distinction, a mistake which has ruin'd thousands——That your conscience is not a law ;—no,—God and reason made the law, and has placed Conscience within you to determine,—not like an *Asiatic Cadi*, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions ; but like a *British judge* in this land of liberty, who makes no new law,——but faithfully declares that glorious law which he finds already written,

SERMON XXVIII.

Temporal Advantages of Religion.

PROVERBS, III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

THERE are two opinions which the inconsiderate are apt to take upon trust.—The first is—a vicious life, is a life of liberty, pleasure, and happy advantages.—The second is—and which is the converse of the first—that a religious life is a servile and most uncomfortable state.

The first breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was by the help of the first of these suggestions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, she should be as God, that is, she should reap some high and strange felicity from doing what was forbidden her.—But I need not repeat the success

—Eve learnt the difference between good and evil by her transgression, which she knew not before—but then she fatally learnt at the same time, that the difference was only this—that good is that which can only give the mind pleasure and comfort—and that evil is that, which must necessarily be attended sooner or later with shame and sorrow.

As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race—so has he carried it on ever since by the very same argument of delusion. — That is, by possessing men's minds early with great expectations of the present incomes of sin, — making them dream of wondrous gratifications they are to feel in following their appetites, in a forbidden way—making them fancy, that their own grapes yield not so delicious a taste as their neighbour's, and that they shall quench their thirst with more pleasure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at first too generally prevails—till experience and proper seasons of reflection make us all at one time or other confess—that our counsellor has

been (as from the beginning) an impostor—and that instead of fulfilling these hopes of gain and sweetness in what is forbidden—that, on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterness and loss.

The second opinion, or, That a religious life is a servile and uncomfortable state, has proved a no less fatal and capital false principle in the conduct of unexperience through life—the foundation of which mistake arising chiefly from this previous wrong judgment—that true happiness and freedom lies in a man's always following his own humour—that to live by moderate and prescribed rules, is to live without joy—that not to prosecute our passions is to be cowards—and to forego every thing for the tedious distance of a future life.

Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleasure but what should arise from that remote prospect—I own we are by nature so goaded on by the desire of present happiness, that was that the case, thousands would faint under the discouragement of so remote an expectation,

—But in the mean time the Scriptures give us a very different prospect of this matter.—There we are told that the service of God is true liberty—that the yoke of Christianity is easy, in comparison of that yoke which must be brought upon us by any other system of living,—and the text tells of wisdom—by which he means Religion, that it has pleasantness in its way, as well as glory in its end—that it will bring us peace and joy, such as the world cannot give.—So that upon examining the truth of this assertion, we shall be set right in this error, by seeing that a religious man's happiness does not stand at so tedious a distance—but is so present, and indeed so inseparable from him, as to be felt and tasted every hour—and of this even the vicious can hardly be insensible, from what he may perceive to spring up in his mind, from any casual act of virtue. And though it is a pleasure that properly belongs to the good—yet let any one try the experiment, and he will see what is meant by that moral delight arising from the conscience of well-doing.—Let him but refresh the

bowels of the needy—let him comfort the broken-hearted—or check an appetite, or overcome a temptation—or receive an affront with temper and meekness—and he shall find the tacit praise of what he has done, darting through his mind, accompanied with a sincere pleasure—conscience playing the monitor even to the loose and most inconsiderate, in their most casual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whispering behind and saying—this is the way of pleasantness—this is the path of peace—walk in it.—

But to do further justice to the text, we must look beyond this inward recompence which is always inseparable from virtue—and take a view of the outward advantages, which are as inseparable from it, and which the apostle particularly refers to, when 'tis said, Godliness has the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come—and in this argument it is, —that religion appears in all its glory and strength—unanswerable in all its obligations—that besides the principal work which it does for us in securing our future well-being in the other world, it is like.

wife the most effectual means to promote our present——and that not only *morally*, upon account of that reward which virtuous actions do entitle a man unto from a just and a wise providence,—but by a natural tendency in themselves, which the duties of religion have to *procure* us riches, health, reputation, credit, and all those things, wherein our temporal happiness is thought to consist, and this not only in promoting the well-being of particular persons, but of public communities and of mankind in general,—agreeable to what the wise man has left us on record, that righteousness exalteth a nation:—insomuch, that could we, in considering this argument, suppose ourselves to be in a capacity of expostulating with God, concerning the terms upon which we would submit to his government,—and to chuse the laws ourselves which we would be bound to observe, it would be impossible for the wit of man to frame any other proposals, which upon all accounts would be more advantageous to our own interests than those very conditions to which we are obliged by the rules

of religion and virtue.—And in this does the reasonableness of Christianity, and the beauty and wisdom of Providence, appear most eminently towards mankind, in governing us by such laws as do most apparently tend to make us happy,—— and in a word, in making that (in his mercy) to be our duty, which in his wisdom he knows to be our interest,—— that is to say, what is most conducive to the ease and comfort of our mind,—the health and strength of our body,—the honour and prosperity of our state and condition,—the friendship and good-will of our fellow-creatures;—to the attainment of all which, no more effectual means can possibly be made use of, than that plain direction,—to lead an uncorrupted life, and to do the thing which is right, to use no deceit in our tongue, nor do evil to our neighbour.

For the better imprinting of which truth in your memories, give me leave to offer a few things to your consideration.

The first is,—that justice and honesty contribute very much towards all the fa-

culties of the mind: I mean, that it clears up the understanding from that mist, which dark and crooked designs are apt to raise in it,—and that it keeps up a regularity in the affections, by suffering no lusts or *by-ends* to disorder them.—That it likewise preserves the mind from all damps of grief and melancholy, which are the sure consequences of unjust actions; and that by such an improvement of the faculties, it makes a man so much the abler to discern, and so much the more cheerful, active, and diligent to mind his business.—Light is sown for the righteous, says the prophet, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Secondly, let it be observed,—that in the continuance and course of a virtuous man's affairs, there is little probability of his falling into considerable disappointments or calamities;—not only because guarded by the providence of God, but that honesty is in its own nature the freest from danger.

First, because such a one lays no projects, which it is the interest of another to blast, and therefore needs no indirect

methods or deceitful practices to secure his interest by undermining others.—The paths of virtue are plain and straight, so that the blind, persons of the meanest capacity, shall not err.—Dishonesty requires skill to conduct it, and as great art to conceal—what 'tis every one's interest to detect. And I think I need not remind you how oft it happens in attempts of this kind—where worldly men, in haste to be rich, have over-run the only means to it,—and for want of laying their contrivances with proper cunning, or managing them with proper secrecy and advantage, have lost for ever, what they might have certainly secured by honesty and plain-dealing.—The general causes of the disappointments in their business, or of unhappiness in their lives, lying but too manifestly in their own disorderly passions, which by attempting to carry them a shorter way to riches and honour, disappoint them of both for ever, and make plain their ruin is from themselves, and that they eat the fruits which their own hands have watered and ripened.

Consider, in the third place, that as the religious and moral man (one of which he cannot be without the other) not only takes the surest course for success in his affairs, but is disposed to procure a help, which never enters into the thoughts of a wicked one; for being conscious of upright intentions, he can look towards heaven, and with some assurance recommend his affairs to God's blessing and direction:—whereas the fraudulent and dishonest man dares not call for God's blessing upon his designs,—or if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it.—Now a man who believes that he has God on his side, acts with another sort of life and courage, than he who knows he stands alone;—like Esau, with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against his.

The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry, but the face of the LORD is against them that do evil.

Consider, in the fourth place, that in all good governments who understand

their own interest, the upright and honest man stands much fairer for preferment, and much more likely to be employed in all things when fidelity is wanted:—for all men, however the case stands with themselves, they love at least to find honesty in those they trust; nor is there any usage we more hardly digest, than that of being outwitted and deceived.—This is so true an observation, that the greatest knaves have no other way to get into business, but by counterfeiting honesty, and pretending to be what they are not; and when the imposture is discovered, as it is a thousand to one but it will, I have just said, what must be the certain consequence:—for when such a one falls,—he has none to help him, so he seldom rises again.

This brings us to a fifth particular, in vindication of the text,—That a virtuous man has this strong advantage on his side (the reverse of the last), that the more and the longer he is known, so much the better he is loved, so much the more trusted;—so that his reputation and his fortune have a gradual increase:—and

if calamities or cross accidents should bear him down,—(as no one stands out of their reach in this world)—if he should fall, who would not pity his distress,—who would not stretch forth his hand to raise him from the ground!—wherever there was virtue, he might expect to meet a friend and brother.—And this is not merely speculation but fact, confirmed by numberless examples in life, of men falling into misfortunes, whose character and tried probity have raised them helps, and bore them up, when every other help has forsook them.

Lastly, to sum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its side,—let us not forget that greatest of all happiness, which the text refers to—in the expression of all its paths being peace, peace and content of mind, arising from the consciousness of virtue, which is the true and only foundation of all earthly satisfaction; and where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you bestow upon a wicked man, they will as soon add a cubit to his stature as to his happiness.—In the midst of the highest

entertainments,—this, like the hand-writing upon the wall, will be enough to spoil and disrelish the feast;—but much more so, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over,—when all is still and silent, when the sinner has nothing to do but attend its lashes and remorses;—and this, in spite of all the common arts of diversion, will be often the case of every wicked man;—for we cannot live always upon the stretch;—our faculties will not bear constant pleasure any more than constant pain;—there will be some vacancies; and when there are, they will be sure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections.—So that, setting aside the great after-reckoning, the pleasures of the wicked are overbought, even in this world.—

I conclude with one observation upon the whole of this argument, which is this.—

Notwithstanding the great force with which it has been often urged by good writers,—there are many cases which it may not reach,—wherein vicious men

may seem to enjoy their portion of this life, and live as happy, and fall into as few troubles as other men;—and therefore it is prudent not to lay more stress upon this argument than it will bear:—but always remember to call in to our aid, that great and more unanswerable argument, which will answer the most doubtful cases which can be stated,—and that is, certainty of a future life, which Christianity has brought to light. However men may differ in their opinions of the usefulness of virtue for our present purposes, no one was ever so absurd, as to deny it served our best and our last interest,—when the little interests of this life were at an end:—upon which consideration we should always lay the great weight which it is fittest to bear, as the strongest appeal, and most unchangeable motive that can govern our actions at all times.—However, as every good argument on the side of religion should in proper times be made use of,—it is fit sometimes to examine this,—by proving virtue is not even destitute of a pre-

sent reward,—but carries in her hand a sufficient recompence for all the self-denials she may occasion:—she is pleasant in the way, as well as in the end;—her ways being ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.—But it is her greatest and most distinguished glory,—that she befriends us hereafter, and brings us peace at the last; and this is a portion she can never be disinherited of,—which may God of his mercy grant us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

same reward—her critics—her hand a
sublime recompense for all the labors
which she may encounter—their
in the way, as well as in the end;—her
ways being ways of pleasantness, and all
her paths peace:—but it is her greatest
and most distinguished glory—that the
heavens are her house, and things in
place at the last; and this is a portion
the can never be diminished of—which
God of his mercy gives to all that
the sake of Jesus Christ
himself, in his own person, and
his obedient and devoted following
to—“angel,” “apostle,” “evangelist,”
“prophet,” “pastor,” “teacher,” “ruler,”
“king,” and “priest,”—all of whom
known to be in the world, and
each, and in a special manner
to witness, and to testify, and
This, as it had been said of David,
called against him, and against his over-
thrown the Jews, to wit:—that an oc-
casion of tribute to the Gentiles;—that
a person of his great character, interest,
and reputation—one who was beloved
from a tribe of Israel, deeply skilled in
the prophecies, and zealous in the

S E R M O N XXIX.

Our Conversation in Heaven.

PHILIP. III. 20. 1st Part.

For our conversation is in Heaven.

THESE words are the conclusion of the account which St. Paul renders of himself, to justify that particular part of his conduct and proceeding,—his leaving so strangely, and deserting his Jewish rites and ceremonies, to which he was known to have been formerly so much attached, and in defence of which he had been so warmly and so remarkably engaged. This, as it had been matter of provocation against him amongst his own countrymen the Jews, so was it no less an occasion of surprise to the Gentiles;—that a person of his great character, interest, and reputation,—one who was descended from a tribe of Israel, deeply skilled in the professions, and zealous in the ob-

servances of the straitest sect of that religion; who had their tenets instilled into him from his tender years, under the institution of the ablest masters;—a Pharisee himself,—the son of a Pharisee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,—one that was so deeply interested, and an accessory in the persecution of another religion, just then newly come up;—a religion to which his whole sect, as well as himself, had been always the bitterest and most inveterate enemies, and were constantly upbraided as such, by the first founder of it;—that a person so beset, and hemm'd in with interests and prejudices on all sides, should after all turn profelyte to the very religion he had hated;—a religion too, under the most universal contempt of any then in the world,—the chiefs and leaders of it men of the lowest birth and education, without any advantages of parts or learning, or other endowments to recommend them:—that he should quit and abandon all his former privileges, to become merely a fellow-labourer with these,—that he should give up the reputation he had acquired amongst

his brethren by the study and labours of a whole life;—that he should give up his friends,—his relations and family, from whom he estranged and banished himself for life;—this was an event so very extraordinary, so odd and unaccountable,—that it might well confound the minds of men to answer for it.— It was not to be accounted for upon the common rules and measures of proceeding in human life.—

The apostle, therefore, since no one else could do it so well for him, comes, in this chapter, to give an explanation why he had thus forsaken so many worldly advantages,—which was owing to a greater and more unconquerable affection to a better and more valuable interest, that in the poor persecuted faith,—which he had once reproached and destroyed,—he had now found such a fulness of divine grace,—such unfathomable depths of God's infinite mercy, and love towards mankind, that he could think nothing too much to part with in order to his embracing Christianity;—nay, he accounted all things but loss,—that is, less than

nothing, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle, after this apology for himself, proceeds, in the second verse before the text, to give a very different representation of the worldly views and sensual principles of other pretending teachers, — who had set themselves up as an example for men to walk by, against whom he renews this caution: — For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies to the cross of Christ, — whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, — *Φρωγυλῆς*, — relish them, making them the only object of their wishes, taking aim at nothing better, and nothing higher, — but *our* conversation, says he in the text, is in heaven. We Christians, who have embraced a persecuted faith, are governed by other considerations, — have greater and nobler views; here we consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers. — Our home is in another country, where we are continually tending; there our hearts and

affections are placed; and when the few days of our pilgrimage shall be over, there shall we return, where a quiet habitation and a perpetual rest is designed and prepared for us for ever.—Our conversation is in heaven, from whence, says he, we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto him.—It is observable, that St. Peter represents the state of Christians under the same image, of strangers on earth, whose city and proper home is heaven:—he makes use of that relation of citizens of heaven, as a strong argument for a pure and holy life,—beseeching them *as pilgrims and strangers here*, as men whose interests and connexions are of so short a date, and so trifling a nature, —to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, that is, unfit it for its heavenly country, and give it a disrelish to the enjoyment of that pure and spiritualized happiness, of which that religion must consist, wherein there shall in

no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination. —The Apostle tells us, that without holiness no man shall see God;—by which no doubt he means, that a virtuous life is the only medium of happiness and terms of salvation, which can only give us admission into heaven. —But some of our divines carry the assertion further, that without holiness,—without some previous similitude wrought in the faculties of the mind, corresponding with the nature of the purest of beings, who is to be the object of our fruition hereafter;—that it is not morally only, but physically impossible for it to be happy,—and that an impure and polluted soul is not only unworthy of so pure a presence as the spirit of God, but even incapable of enjoying it, could it be admitted.

And here, not to feign a long hypothesis, as some have done, of a sinner's being admitted into heaven, with a particular description of his condition and behaviour there,—we need only consider, that the supreme good, like any other good, is of a relative nature, and conse-

quently the enjoyment of it must require some qualification in the faculty, as well as the enjoyment of any other good does;—there must be something antecedent in the disposition and temper, which will render that good a good to that individual,——otherwise though (it is true) it may be possessed,—yet it never can be enjoyed.—

Preach to a voluptuous epicure, who knows of no other happiness in this world but what arises from good eating and drinking;—such a one, in the Apostle's language, whose God was his belly;—preach to him of the abstractions of the soul, tell of its flights, and brisker motion in the pure regions of immensity;—represent to him that saints and angels eat not,—but that the spirit of a man lives for ever upon wisdom and holiness, and heavenly contemplations:—why, the only effect would be, that the fat glutton would stare awhile upon the preacher, and in a few minutes fall fast asleep.—No; if you would catch his attention, and make him take in your discourse greedily,—you must preach to him out of the Alcoran,—talk

of the raptures of sensual enjoyments, and of the pleasures of the perpetual feasting, which Mahomet has described;—there you touch upon a note which awakens and sinks into the inmost recesses of his soul;—without which, discourse as wisely and abstractedly as you will of heaven, your representations of it, however glorious and exalted, will pass like the songs of melody over an ear incapable of discerning the distinction of sounds.

We see, even in the common intercourses of society,—how tedious it is to be in the company of a person whose humour is disagreeable to our own, though perhaps in all other respects of the greatest worth and excellency.—How then can we imagine that an ill-disposed soul, whose conversation never reached to heaven, but whose appetites and desires, to the last hour, have grovell'd upon this unclean spot of earth;—how can we imagine it should hereafter take pleasure in God, or be able to taste joy or satisfaction from his presence, who is so infinitely pure that he even putteth no trust in his saints,——nor are the heavens themselves (as Job

says) clean in his sight?—The consideration of this has led some writers so far, as to say, with some degree of irreverence in the expression,——that it was not in the power of God to make a wicked man happy, if the soul was separated from the body, with all its vicious habits and inclinations unreformed;—which thought a very able divine in our church has pursued so far, as to declare his belief,——that could the happiest mansion in heaven be supposed to be allotted to a gross and polluted spirit, it would be so far from being happy in it, that it would do penance there to all eternity:——by which he meant, it would carry such appetites along with it, for which there could be found no suitable objects.—A sufficient cause for constant torment;—for those that it found there, would be so disproportioned, that they would rather vex and upbraid it, than satisfy its wants.—This, it is true, is mere speculation,——and what concerns us not to know;—it being enough for our purpose, that such an experiment is never likely to be tried,——that we stand upon different terms with God,——that

a virtuous life is the foundation of all our happiness,—that as God has no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with him;—and that, if we expect our happiness to be in heaven, we must have our conversation in heaven, whilst upon earth, make it the frequent subject of our thoughts and meditations, let every step we take tend that way,—every action of our lives be conducted by that great mark of the prize of our high calling, forgetting those things which are behind;—forgetting this world,—disengaging our thoughts and affections from it, and thereby transforming them to the likeness of what we hope to be hereafter.—How can we expect the inheritance of the saints of light, upon other terms than what they themselves obtained it?—

Can that body expect to rise and shine in glory, that is a slave to lust, or dies in the fiery pursuit of an impure desire? Can that heart ever become the lightsome seat of peace and joy, that burns hot as an oven with anger, rage, envy, lust, and strife? full of wicked imaginations, set only to devise and entertain evil?

Can that flesh appear in the last day and inherit the kingdom of Heaven in the glorified strength of perpetual youth, that is now clearly consumed in intemperance, sinks in the surfeit of continual drunkenness and gluttony, and then tumbles into the grave, and almost pollutes the ground that is under it?—Can we reasonably suppose that head shall ever wear or become the crown of righteousness and peace, in which dwells nothing but craft and avarice, deceit and fraud and treachery,—which is always plodding upon worldly designs, racked with ambition,—rent asunder with discord,—ever delighting in mischief to others, and unjust advantages to itself?—Shall that tongue, which is the glory of a man when rightly directed,—be ever set to God's heavenly praises, and warble forth the harmonies of the blessed, that is now full of cursing and bitterness, back-biting and slander, under which is ungodliness and vanity and the poison of asps?

Can it enter into our hearts even to hope, that those hands can ever receive

the reward of righteousness, that are full of blood, laden with the wages of iniquity, of theft, rapine, violence, extortion, or other unlawful gain? or that those feet shall ever be beautiful upon the mountains of light and joy, that were never shod for the preparation of the gospel,—that have run quite out of the way of God's word,—and made haste only to do evil?—No surely.—In this sense,—he that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.

How inconsistent the whole body of sin is, with the glories of the celestial body that shall be revealed hereafter,—and that in proportion as we fix the representation of these glories upon our minds, and in the more numerous particulars we do it,—the stronger the necessity as well as persuasion to deny ourselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, as the only way to entitle us to that blessedness spoken of in the Revelations—of those who do his

commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and shall enter into the gates of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels—to the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,—who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

May GOD give us grace to live under the perpetual influence of this expectation,—that by the habitual impression of these glories upon our imaginations, and the frequent sending forth our thoughts and employing them on the other world—we may disentangle them from this,—and by so having our conversation in heaven whilst we are here, we may be thought fit inhabitants for it hereafter—that when GOD at the last day shall come with thousands and ten thousands of his saints to judge the world, we may enter with them into

happiness, and with angels and arch-
angels, and all the company of hea-
ven, we may praise and magnify his
glorious name, and enjoy his presence
for ever.

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men made perfect—who have washed
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May God give us grace to live under

the END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.

6 OCT 57

